

RESOURCE ALLOCATION, ETHNICITY, AND EDUCATION

**A CASE STUDY OF CENTRAL
PROVINCE, SRI LANKA**

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Resource allocation, ethnicity, and education

A case study of Central Province,
Sri Lanka

by

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PROVINCIAL COUNCILS: A POLITICAL APPROACH

A Case Study of Central Province

Introduction

In September 1987 the Sri Lankan government passed a Bill to establish Provincial Councils (PCs) for the nine provinces of Sri Lanka. Elections were held for these councils on a staggered basis. The establishment of these councils and getting them off the ground faced many problems due to the prevailing situation in the country. On one side the Sri Lanka Freedom Party - SLFP, which is the major opposition party opposed the establishment of the Provincial Councils and boycotted the elections. They were joined by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - JVP who took a Sinhala extremist position and opposed any form of regional autonomy and concessions to the minorities on ideological grounds. Not only did they oppose the establishment of PCs, but they also carried out a systematic violent campaign to prevent people from contesting and voting in the Provincial Council elections.

The Presidential elections held in December 1988 also made the position of the Provincial Councils very uncertain. There was very much the possibility of a victory of the SLFP candidate in the elections. Her platform was to dissolve the Provincial Councils and to replace it with another framework. The dissolution of the Councils would have reverted the situation back to square one. Although the SLFP candidate also proposed a form of regional autonomy as their solution to the ethnic problem, it was not certain how much importance could be given to these proposals. The political base of the SLFP is such that it is extremely unlikely that they would have gone along with their solution if there was opposition from their Sinhala political constituency.

In Sri Lanka the attempts at devolution were always controversial and had led to political tensions due to the ethnic dimensions accompanying it. Two former Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka representing both political parties that have ruled the country since independence, had to give up proposals for regional autonomy and devolution of power because of the opposition from the Sinhala majority in the South. Among the Sinhalese any form of regional autonomy has been equated with 'separation' or 'dividing' the country. The political power of this opinion is such that it was extremely difficult to imagine a government in Colombo agreeing to a scheme of devolution on its own. In the past such ideas were given up as soon as the opposition among the Sinhalese manifested itself. Therefore the Indian intervention and Indo-Sri Lanka Accord had been a crucial factor for the emergence of this devolution package. In fact the Accord with India is the only document signed by a head of state in Sri Lanka accepting the multiethnic character of the country and the fact that certain areas of the country are identified with particular ethnic groups. This formed the basis on which the scheme for devolution was proposed. In other words the external factors played a crucial role in bringing about devolution in Sri Lanka.

Despite these problems it seems that Sri Lanka does not have any way out of the ethnic conflict other than through some form of regional autonomy. Regional autonomy seem to be the inevitable outcome at this historical juncture. Even in the case of the SLFP, although they have gone back on the manifesto that they proposed during the Presidential elections, they seem to come back to the same basic position. In the new manifesto that the SLFP issued for the general election they have gone back to the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact, which also envisaged a form of regional autonomy. This makes the JVP in the South the only major political formation opposing this historical trend.

As a result of these uncertainties generated by political processes the Provincial Councils did not really get off the ground until the results of the Presidential election and the general election was clear. The former was held in December 1988 and the latter in February 1989. The victory of the UNP in both these elections took away the fears about dissolution of the

whole system. It was only after these elections that the Provincial Councils began to be active. However even now the Provincial Councils are in the process of being formed. This status affects any study of the Provincial Councils undertaken at this stage.

This report is the first part of a two part report devoted to the study of policy issues in education based on the example of the Central Province. The main objective of this study is to look at the possible policy issues in a specific area that the Provincial Councils will face keeping in mind ethnic politics which actually brought about the whole system of devolution. The specific area chosen for the study is education because of its political sensitivity. Being an important avenue for social mobility education is a very sensitive area for ethnic politics. Therefore it gives greater scope for looking at the policy issues of the Provincial Council system, keeping politics at the centre of analysis.

This analysis is also confined to a specific geographical area - namely the Central Province. The Central Province is multiethnic. This Province has the highest concentration of Indian Tamils found anywhere in the island. It also has the plantation industry which is still crucial for Sri Lanka's economy. Finally it is also an area where state intervention in education is needed. All these make the Central Province a relevant and an interesting geographical location to be focused upon.

The first part of the study which follows is entirely devoted to an analysis of political aspects of the devolutionary process that affect the Central Province. This forms the backdrop for the more specific discussion on education which will follow in the second report.

Part I- Theoretical issues

The Administrative approach

Analysis of various devolutionary exercises from an administrative perspective can be identified as a dominant tradition. Basically this analysis concentrate on administrative structures introduced in the exercise of devolution and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of the objectives envisaged by these policies. This perspective has been adopted in many studies carried out both internationally (1) and nationally (2).

In this approach the term 'decentralisation' is given a very wide meaning. For example reviewing decentralisation experiences in developing countries (3) identified four types of 'decentralisation. These are deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization. These four types include various types of attempts having the objective of reducing the power of the central government. "Deconcentration is the handing over of some amount of administrative responsibility to lower levels within central government ministries and agencies."....."Delegation transfers managerial responsibility for specifically defined functions to organisations that are outside the regular bureaucratic structure and that are only indirectly controlled by the central government."...."Devolution is the creation or strengthening - financially or legally - of subnational units of government, the activities of which are substantially outside the direct control of the central government.".... and "Some governments have divested themselves of responsibility for functions and have either transferred them to voluntary organisations or allowed them to be performed by private enterprises." This is privatisation.

After defining 'decentralisation' to include all these diverse processes, the next task of this analysis is to look at the effectiveness of the structures that had been introduced as a result of these policy changes in achieving policy objectives and to identify the 'factors' that

influence the success and the failure of the 'decentralisation' exercise. "In general assessments of decentralisation in developing countries suggest that four main factors affect the success or failure of these : (a) the degree to which central political leaders and bureaucracies support decentralisation and the organisations to which responsibilities are transferred; (b) the degree to which the dominant behaviour, attitudes and culture are conducive to decentralised decision making and administration; (c) the degree to which policies and programmes are appropriately designed and organised to promote decentralised decision making and management; and (d) the degree to which adequate financial, human, and physical resources are made available to the organizations to which responsibilities are transferred. (4).

Similarly in the case of Sri Lanka, applying the same theoretical approach, "clarity and consistency of objectives of decentralisation programme", 'extent of comprehensiveness in the initial formulation of the programme', 'direction and leadership of the programme', 'the adequate availability of resources', 'inter-organisation linkages' and the attitudinal factors and capability of the officials giving leadership to the decentralisation exercise had been identified as important factors influencing the success or the failure of decentralisation exercises (5).

Although this form of analysis of administrative structures has a value at a certain level of policy formulation it is inadequate for several reasons. One of the main problems of this perspective arises because it looks at the administrative structures in isolation from the historical and societal processes of which they are a part. In fact the very emergence of these structures are dependent on societal processes and the latter continue to influence the manner in which these structures are able to function. As this form of analysis does not give adequate importance to these societal processes underlying 'decentralisation', it actually lumps together very different exercises under a single term 'decentralisation' although all of them apparently reduce the power of the central government. For example privatisation of the production processes emerges from quite a different set of socio-political processes from that demanding devolution of political power, so does decentralisation. What is more important is that these varied socio-political processes bringing about these policies are relevant and have a role to play in the 'success' or the 'failure' of these exercises.

Devoid of the historical context which creates these structures in the first place, this analysis attributes to these structures with a 'rationality' that allows them to change society and achieve the objectives for which they are set up. In other words, according to this analysis these structures by themselves are capable of achieving the objective that they are meant for, if only those 'factors' impeding them can be rectified. But what of these factors? What brings them about in the first place? How can they be explained? It is at this point that the analysis has to move beyond the structures to include the socio-political processes that bring these structures about and the power struggles accompanying them.

Even within the tradition of administrative studies some of the authors have identified the importance of politics in understanding devolution or decentralisation. James Craig (6) had this to say in an introduction to one of his articles on decentralisation experience of Sri Lanka. "The main thrust of the argument is that structures and processes of administrative systems can only be properly understood by major attention to political factors and the way events shape and crowd into the arenas in which politics and administration meet and interact. There appears to be increasing evidence that attempts to distil out and conceptualise the "administrative" fails to enhance our understanding of complex social reality. The study of administrative systems requires a wider horizon if it to escape the suffocating ideology of conventional administrative and managerial frameworks. In tracing the interaction of administration and politics, difficult analytical problems certainly emerge, but what seems to inform the Sri Lankan experience is the centrality of the political which appears at the heart of the system of District Administration - almost as an independent variable."

In the case of the present exercise of devolution in Sri Lanka it is very important at the very outset to differentiate this from earlier attempts at decentralisation. The principal difference arises from the fact that the present exercise is a result of the emergence of ethnic contradictions. Therefore the ethnic conflict and the politics of the ethnic conflict have played the central role in bringing about devolution. Therefore any analysis of the present exercise of devolution should keep ethnicity and ethnic contradictions at the centre of analysis. It was ethnic contradictions that gave birth to the system of devolution, and they are going to be important for the success or the failure of PCs.

Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts

In theoretical writings of ethnicity there are two important conceptual issues that are central. The first is how does one understand the term ethnicity or what does one mean by it. The second is conceptualisation of ethnic change or transformations of ethnicity with time. Although these two theoretical issues are interrelated we shall take them separately for clarity of the presentation.

In literature there seem to be three approaches in understanding the term ethnicity. In the first of these approaches ethnicity is equated with cultural attributes. In other words ethnicity means ascriptive characteristics associated with ethnic groups, such as language, dress codes, cultural practices, etc. The second approach to ethnicity is to see ethnicity or ethnic groups as interest groups. "Here ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, involving a struggle for power among ethnic groups in furtherance and defence of their collective interests." (7) With this approach one accepts ethnic groups to be a unit around which people can organise themselves and articulate their concrete material needs even in a modern society. Thus the category of ethnicity becomes meaningful in understanding power struggles in society. The third approach to ethnicity is to see it primarily as an identity. "Two important implications stem from this perspective. First it makes no assumption about the 'content' of ethnicity: ethnic groups provide an organisational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms in different socio- cultural systems. Second the critical focus of investigation from this standpoint become the ethnic boundary that defines the group and not the cultural stuff that it encloses." (8) For this perspective all questions related to identity formation and their transformation in history become the focus of analysis.

The next important issue is the question of ethnic change or transformations in ethnicity. It is in this domain that most of the conventional or 'common sense' understandings of ethnicity fail. Most of the conventional approaches to 'ethnicity' are based on some form of ahistorical psychologism. Here the origin of 'ethnicity' is seen in the domain of psyche of the collective or community. It is something that is deeply embedded in the psyche and ethnic conflicts are manifestations of this. Thus the driving force of ethnicity has very little to do with processes taking place outside the psyche and therefore in the wider society. Most of these psychological explanations of ethnicity are ahistorical. In fact they do not have a theory of ethnic change. What they cannot explain is the different manifestations of 'ethnicity' at different historical periods. For example why is that we have seen in Sri Lanka an aggravation of the ethnic conflict in the seventies and eighties if it was a property of the collective psyche of Sinhalese and Tamils all along? Not only this, the nature of the manifestations of the ethnic phenomena differ during different historical periods. An ahistorical approach to ethnicity cannot explain this either. It is to explain these specific manifestations of ethnic phenomena that it is necessary to link it with the processes taking place in the wider society and therefore analyse it within the historical context.

Study of ethnic change also suffered to a certain extent because some of the dominant branches of social sciences did not give sufficient attention to it. An example is provided by prevalent 'Development theories'. Most of the dominant development theories either ignored

the phenomenon of ethnicity or relegated it to the past as a dying feature. In the case of development theories that linked 'development' with 'modernisation' ethnic phenomena were relegated to the traditional sphere. It was expected that with development and modernisation ascriptive characteristics such as ethnic identity would become less important. They would be replaced by acquired characteristics such as identities arising from occupations. The societal processes were expected to be governed more by these acquired identities and 'rational' criteria. At the same time, getting rid of such traditional features like ethnicity was important for 'development' and progress. Thus these theories not only relegated ethnicity to the past but also saw it 'disappearing' in the future. In other words this theory of ethnic change hoped that ethnicity would disappear in the future and in fact advocated this for the sake of 'development'.

This approach towards ethnic change was very much based on equating ethnicity with cultural attributes. "Given a definition of ethnic groups as cultural groups, it followed inevitably that a concept like assimilation should develop as a central tool of analysis in understanding ethnic change." (9) Thus 'modernisation' was expected to assimilate ethnic identities into new universal identities..

At a theoretical level there are parallels between the modernisation approach and the orthodox Marxist view. Like the modernisation approach the latter relegates ethnicity to the past. This form of analysis expected class to be the major driving force in history. As in the case of modernisation theory here also we see the expectation of replacement of one social category by another. In the case of orthodox Marxist theories this was expected with the development of capitalist relations. This orthodox analysis expected the categories that are operative at the level of relations of production to be determinant and predominant. Some of the trends of this dominant economism even expected some nations to be 'non-historic'. The dynamism of capitalism was expected to absorb these nations into larger entities and their individual identity was to disappear. Very often when ethnicity continues to prevail despite the expectation of this form of analysis it is explained away as a 'manipulation of the ruling class.'

Dominant development theories also begin with the acceptance of the nation-state as given. In the case of the third world countries once they have emerged from colonialism, the political entity that emerged was equated with the nation. What was missing was the concept of nation formation. This would mean that although a political entity called the state had been formed it cannot be equated with a nation. Nation formation is a much longer process than the formation of a state. In the case of multiethnic societies the establishment of a social contract between ethnic groups who are found within a society is important in the formation of a nation. But the prevalent development theories accepted the nation-state as given and then the concern was development.

In a way development theories became a part and parcel of the dominant nationalism, which in many countries coincided with ethnic nationalism of the majority ethnic group. The main concern of the development theories was to strengthen the nation state and the dominant ethnic nationalism that had an hegemonic position within it. Depending on the framework of analysis each version of development theories advocated what has to be done in order to achieve the goals of development and what to do with ethnicity and ethnic nationalisms. For the modernisation theory it was a question of overcoming these traditional aspects of the society. The dependency theory on the other hand looked towards the restructuring of relationships with the 'Centre' countries so as to strengthen the nation state. The orthodox Marxists looked towards a rearrangement of class relations. For all of them ethnicity or ethnic loyalties was either a remnant of the past, a divisive force that weakens the nation state or hinders the revolutionary process, or at best a nuisance. At present there is some recognition of this shortcoming in the dominant development theories, and some scholars have considered the incorporation of ethnicity into development theories as an important

theoretical task awaiting to be done.(10)

In this paper we will be understanding ethnicity as an 'interest group' and as an 'identity'. It is a combination of the second and the third approaches mentioned above. For us ethnicity is a category that has a real existence in society and gets reproduced in society. It has a basis in material practices and institutions which help to reproduce it. There is also no inevitability of its disappearance. Secondly, ethnicity can form the organising principle for people brought together by a common ethnic identity, to group together as an interest group in order to struggle for resources or power in society. This struggle is based on organisations and material practices that have a real existence in society. Therefore it cannot be wished away as a 'false consciousness' or 'a manipulation of the elite'. On the other hand we also need to ask "how the sense of ethnic identity is generated and transmitted, how it persists and how it is transformed or disappears, yielding to other forms of identities". Under different historical circumstance it can transform itself to emerge in different forms. Therefore it is a socially constructed category that changes according to historical circumstances.

Ethnicity can be viewed as some kind of a reservoir for formation of identities. The socialisation process of human beings is carried out through institutions that produce and reproduce ethnic identities. Therefore it is always present as a reservoir that can give an input for the formation of identities of individual human beings. Hence its strength and prevalence over a long period of time. However more than at the level of individual human beings, what interests us here is the emergence of ethnic identities at the societal level as ideological systems and politicisation of them. This is certainly related to the processes that take place in the wider society. The emergence and transformation of ethnic identities do not take place in isolation from the societal processes. Given the necessary conditions, these societal processes can transform ethnicity to a highly politicised ideology that lies at the basis of social conflicts.

In the case of ethnic conflicts the issue is to understand the underlying process which transforms ethnicity which at one level is only an empirical fact that describes an ethnic group (ethnicity as a cultural attribute) into highly politicised movements. These politicised movements are manifestations of ethnicity as an identity and as an interest group. In situations of ethnic conflict what is more relevant is the more politicised form of ethnicity. Therefore in this paper when we use the term ethnicity or ethnic identity what we mean is the politicised manifestations of it. It is not that other forms do not exist. But in order to understand the ethnic conflicts it is necessary to focus attention on the politicised forms of it.

In understanding the emergence of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts it might be difficult to arrive at generalisations that are of a universal nature. It is quite possible that there are social phenomena that cannot be generalised at a universal level. Some writers have come to similar conclusions in studying a phenomenon like nationalism (11). If this is true in the case of nationalism it might be more likely for ethnicity. Ethnicity need not evolve in a unilinear fashion. Therefore it might be difficult to speak about 'decline' or 'ascendancy' of ethnicity in a unilinear fashion. What might be more useful is concrete analysis taking into account the specificities of the situation.

Part II- Devolution and ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a multiethnic society. According to 1981 census Sinhalese (74.6%), Sri Lankan Tamils (12.6%), Indian Tamils (5.5%) and Muslims (7.4%) - Moors (7.1%) Malays (0.3%) form the major ethnic groups. As Sri Lanka was moving towards independence, in discussing

the question of the state structure the multiethnic character of the Sri Lankan society became a crucial issue. Although in the late twenties some of the political leaders and representatives of certain ethnic groups put forward the idea of a federal constitution for Sri Lanka, this did not materialise. Sri Lanka emerged into independence with a unitary form of government. In order to safeguard the rights of minorities there was dependence on checks and balances at the Centre. Distribution of seats in parliament so that there was some sort of balanced representation, multimember constituencies where there were pockets of minorities, a second chamber to which minority representatives could be appointed and clauses in the constitution to safeguard the rights of the minorities were some of the measures adopted.

The history of the breakdown of ethnic relations in the post independent Sri Lanka was the history of ineffectiveness of these safeguards at the centre. The ineffectiveness of these safeguards were shown with the emergence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as a dominant political force. The electoral process helped to bring these pressures on the state. The elections of 1956 and coming into power of a government with a hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist ideology were a turning point in this process. Although the influence of this ideology was seen immediately after independence, when a section of a minority was disenfranchised, it was after 1956 that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism became the dominant ideology of the ruling class. It is from this point onwards that a class block consisting of Sinhala bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie began to share state power. One result of this was the state dominated populist development policies within a capitalist framework and the other was the hegemony of Sinhala Buddhist ideology and systematic dismantling of the safeguards for the minorities that were introduced at the time of independence.

This process shows the contradictions of a bourgeois democratic system in a multiethnic society. On one side the hegemony of Sinhala Buddhist ideology at the level of the state was achieved through the electoral process, which was a manifestation of this democracy. On the other hand this was done by denying rights to the minorities. Once ethnic consciousness began to dominate the electoral process, it was used by all groups who had a chance of ruling the country, for their own political ends. The mass consciousness was also dominated by ethnicity. Even the ruling sections whose objective interests within an internationally operative capitalist system was to overcome narrow ethnic nationalism, began to play politics with it in order to stay in power. This of course does not mean that ethnicity in politics is only a result of 'manipulation by the ruling classes.' On the other hand ethnicity has a real existence within the mass consciousness. This is true of all ethnic groups. Both the rulers and the ruled form a part of a society where ethnic consciousness has come to dominate.

The response of the minorities to the process of emergence of Sinhala Buddhist ideology primarily came from the Sri Lankan Tamils who form the numerically biggest minority. The Tamil political leadership agreed to the safeguards at the centre at the time of independence, although the demands of some were more than what was agreed upon. These demands soon changed to one based on a regional concept. In the mid fifties the majority Tamil party put forward the demand for a federal system of government and by the early seventies this had escalated to one demanding a separate state. The enactment of the first republican constitution in 1972 saw the emergence of the separatist demand and the beginning of the armed groups within the Tamil social formation. This constitution removed the safeguards that were there in the previous one, gave pre-eminence to Buddhism in addition to the Sinhala Language which was already entrenched in the constitution, and concentrated all power in the Sinhala dominated legislature. The early seventies also saw the aggravation of the ethnic relations due to the introduction of new admission schemes for entrance into the university. These schemes had discriminatory elements vis a vis the Tamil students. Escalation of these demands also saw the emergence of a new political leadership within the Sri Lankan Tamils and change in the form of the political struggle. The social background of

the leadership was more of a petty bourgeois character. They were less westernised than the earlier leadership, and were based in the Northern Province where there is a concentration of a Tamil population. For them armed struggle became the dominant form of political activity.

Thus by the time the general election was held in 1977 the ethnic contradictions had already aggravated. This had resulted in the Tamil United Liberation Front that spearheaded the demand for separate state not only sweeping the electorate in the North and to a lesser extent in the East, but also becoming the major opposition party. For the first time in the Sri Lankan history parliament also reflected the ethnic polarisation in the country. While the United National Party with a five-sixth majority obtained largely from the Sinhala majority was on the government side, the Tamil United Liberation Front was leading the opposition after winning the Tamil vote on a separate state demand.

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict was aggravated to a level of a civil war in certain parts of the country within a very short period of the emergence of armed struggle as the dominant form of political struggle on the part of the Sri Lankan Tamil minority. The armed struggle of the Tamil militants developed into a qualitatively new stage after the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983. This saw the migration of more than one hundred thousand refugees from Sri Lanka to the Tamil Nadu State in India. This not only gave more recruits to the Tamil militant movements, but also paved the way for the involvement of India. Within a short period of four years this conflict escalated with a heavy toll on the Sri Lankan society.

The aggravating conflict process also brought back the concept of regional autonomy as a way out of the situation. Therefore once again the idea that had been rejected by the Sri Lankan majority as a solution to the ethnic problem several times, came back to the political arena. Of course this time it had emerged with the ethnic contradiction at a much higher stage of development and with the participation of India in the whole process.

The first mentioning of a scheme for devolution of power through a regional autonomy framework within the context of the aggravation of the ethnic conflict in the seventies and eighties came about in the so called annexure 'C'. This was a document that emerged from a meeting between the Prime Minister of India and President of Sri Lanka after India got involved in Sri Lanka's problem. This came about after the anti-Tamil pogrom of July '83. However this document could not get the approval of the All Party Conference that was summoned to look for solutions for the ethnic conflict after the July '83 incidents. This was a conference that the U.N.P. government promised in its election manifesto, but was called only after massive violence of July '83. Despite this, the internal actors who took part in the All Party Conference, which included members of all political parties, could not go beyond a framework of District Development Councils, that was already in place, as a solution to the problem. While the internal actors were still unable to think beyond this limited framework, the conflict intensified significantly, India getting involved in the whole process in a much bigger way. The conflict generated much international publicity and the impact on the economy also becoming significant.

The dynamics of the conflict finally took a new turn with the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord in July 1987. This is the first official document signed by a Head of State of Sri Lanka that had accepted the multiethnic character of the Sri Lankan society and the need for devolution of power to the North and Eastern Provinces so as to meet the grievances of the Tamil people. This resulted in legislation being brought in order to set up Provincial Councils. Thus the ethnic conflict has brought the regional concept as a way out of the situation firmly back into the political discourse. It will be extremely difficult to go against this historical trend without suggesting a viable alternative in its place.

This struggle of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka is basically a struggle for control over land in the areas where they predominate. This can be analysed as having several dimensions: political; a dimension related to ethnic identity; a socio- economic dimension and finally a dimension related to the basic security of an ethnic group. The political dimension is related to the demand to have greater political power in the areas where there is a concentration of an ethnic group. The emergence of political structures granting a certain degree of devolution is related to this. The second aspect of identity emerges because the ethnic identity of an ethnic group becomes strongly tied up with the land on which an ethnic group has lived for generations. The control over land also has a socio-economic angle. This is related to control over resources of that area. Finally the sense of security that an ethnic group has is related to the land that they have inhabited for generations. As a result ethnic conflicts very easily touch upon very basic concerns of ethnic groups like their security.

In the case of Sri Lanka the specific geographical distribution of the ethnic groups has helped to link the 'ethnicity' of different ethnic groups with a particular part of the country. This has become prominent in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils. It might not be so clear in the case of Muslims and Indian Tamils.. However a closer look into the development of ethnic identities of these two groups in recent times shows that there is a linkage between their identities and geographical areas in these cases as well. The geographical areas relevant are parts of the Eastern Province in the case of the Muslim minority and parts of the Central Province in the case of the Indian Tamil community. Thus linkage between ethnic identities and geographical space is not a phenomena associated only with Sri Lankan Tamils, although their case is heard loud and clear. This is a phenomenon associated with the other two major minority ethnic groups as well.

Therefore the transfer of power from a centralised system to a devolved one is an attempt to reduce the power of the central government over a geographical area which now comes under the control of the Provincial Council. In the case of geographical areas with a concentration of a certain ethnic group, this will amount to transferring power to their representatives. This is bound to be accompanied by processes that are contradictory and conflictual. The Provincial Councils have to operate within these contradictory processes. Their success or the failure will be determined by their capacity to mediate within these contradictions.

Part III- Ethno-political processes in the Central Province

The Table 1 below gives the ethnic composition of the Central Province at the time of 1981 Census.

Table 1

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	C.P.
Sinhala	74.29	79.85	42.14	65.62
S.L.Tamil	5.04	5.76	12.67	7.46
Ind.Tamil	9.39	6.97	42.66	18.95
S.L.Moor	10.47	6.99	2.02	7.31
Burgher	0.20	0.08	0.12	0.15
Malay	0.26	0.16	0.19	0.22
Other	0.35	0.19	0.21	0.28

Source: Census of population and housing 1981

It shows that the Province as a whole is multiethnic. Almost 35 per cent of the population of the Province does not belong to the majority community. Secondly Nuwara Eliya is a district with a clear Tamil speaking majority. Close to 43 per cent of the population of this district is from the Indian Tamil ethnic background. They also form the biggest minority group in the Province with 19 percentage points.

When looking at these data on the ethnic composition one must remember the tendency of some sections of the Indian Tamil population to identify themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils once they have obtained Sri Lankan citizenship. This had been noted by some researchers and in Census reports(12),(13). According to a Census report "little over two hundred thousand Indian Tamils have reported themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils"(14) during the 1981 census. This was about 24% of the Indian Tamil population at that time. Therefore the actual percentage of Indian Tamils in the Central Province should be higher than the 19% stated above. It is somewhere between 19 to 26.5 per cent. The latter figure is the total of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils in the Central Province.

Due to the presence of the Indian Tamil population the Central Province also has a concentration of non-citizens. According to Census data of 1981 around 15 per cent of the population of the Province fall into this category. From this close to 10 per cent is concentrated in the Nuwara Eliya district. However this category of people is bound to get reduced as more and more people of Indian Tamil origin are granted Sri Lankan citizenship.

The Central Province is not only multiethnic, but over the years it has got ethnically segregated. An analysis of figures for ethnic distribution of the population in the Province for 1971 and 1981 brings this out.

Table 2

	Kandy		Matale		N'Eliya	
	'71	'81	'71	'81	'71	'81
Sinhalese	62.3	74.3	74.5	80.0	40.2	42.1
Sri Lankan Tamil	4.0	5.0	3.5	5.8	4.1	12.7
Indian Tamil	24.1	9.4	14.9	7.0	52.3	42.7
Sri Lankan Moor	8.2	10.5	6.4	7.0	1.6	2.0
Burger	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Malay	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Census Reports, 1971 & 1981

Analysing these changes in the ethnic distribution of the Province a recent study noted that "...between 1971 and 1981 while there was a return migration of Indian Tamils from Sri Lanka to India there was a parallel movement of Indian Tamils from mid country plantation areas where they are outnumbered by the Sinhalese towards their own ethnic concentrations in Nuwara Eliya and Vavuniya districts." (15) The mid country plantation areas specially mentioned in the article were Kandy and Matale. " In the districts of Kandy and Matale representing the mid country plantation areas the decline in the number of Indian Tamils is twice the average for the whole island." (16) In 1981, 30 per cent of the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka lived in the Nuwara Eliya district and the entire Central Province had of this ethnic group.

The drop in the proportion of the Indian Tamil population in the Kandy district from 24.1 per cent in 1971 to 9.4 per cent in 1981 is quite significant. Although their proportion had got reduced in the other two districts as well, it has not reached the same magnitude. On the other hand Kandy shows 12% increase in the proportion of the Sinhalese. This is the highest for any district in Sri Lanka during the intercensal period.

It seems that Kandy is a district from where there was repatriation proportionately larger than from other districts. During the intercensal period Nuwara Eliya is the district that shows a negative population growth- obviously a result of the repatriation process. However when the migration figures are taken the outmigration from the Kandy district is much higher than from the Nuwara Eliya district in absolute terms. This could have been because of a repatriation of a large section of the Indian Tamil population from the Kandy district. The population changes between the intercensal period have made Kandy a predominantly a Sinhala district, while there is a concentration of Indian Tamil population in the Nuwara Eliya district.

If we take the changes in the ethnic composition of the population between 1946 and 1981 the picture is much more striking.

Table 3

	Kandy		Matale		N'Eliya	
	S	I.T	S	I.T	S	I.T
1946	57.8	29.2	68.1	21.9	37.8	57.3
1953	58.0	30.5	69.1	20.2	35.8	59.2
1963	59.8	28.2	72.3	17.3	38.4	56.8
1971	62.2	24.5	74.1	15.3	41.3	51.7
1981	75.0	9.3	78.9	6.8	35.9	47.3

Source: Census Reports for different years

Concentration of the Indian Tamils in the Nuwara Eliya district is a result of an out flow of this population to relatively safe areas. One of the areas from which an outflow has taken place are the mid country estates. Mid-country estates existing in a different setting from the classical plantation area came under a lot of pressure from outside forces. It must also be remembered these were areas where much of JVP activity was seen during the 1971 insurgency. This was the beginning of the entry of violence into the political dynamics of the mid-country. Since then the role of violence in various forms had increased in these areas. These areas had been also been subjected to anti-Tamil pogroms at various times. As concluded by one of the researchers " the outflow of Indian Tamils from mid country areas can be seen as a result of series of coercive pressures emanating from the organs of the state, political parties and unorganised bands of rural people. The pressures operating in the area include legal, political and administrative action on one hand and physical violence directed against them on the other."(17) Similar processes could have affected the movement and resulting ethnic segregation that we already observed in the Central Province. As a result of these processes " it is clear that Nuwara Eliya district has been identified and used as a place of refuge by the Indian Tamils fleeing from other areas"(18)

The ethnic composition of the Central Province shows us that there are three ethno-social groups who are important in order to understand the ethno-political processes of this area that any Provincial Council has to deal with. Indian Tamil plantation labour, Kandyan Sinhalese with a large peasant population and Muslims who seem to have a relatively higher urban presence are these ethno-social groups. We shall now go on to analyse the ethno-political tendencies among these groups in order to lay the background for the discussion that will follow.

Indian Tamil Plantation Labour*

According to 1981 census the total Indian Tamil population in Sri Lanka was 818656. Of them 644255, that is 78 per cent were lived in the estate sector. At the same time 71.4 per cent of the estate population was from the Indian Tamil ethnic background. Therefore still the fate of the Indian Tamil ethnic group is closely tied up with the estate sector.

Most available analyses on the nature of the plantation labour have regarded them as an integral part of the plantation system established during the colonial period. This system had all the characteristics of a 'total institution' (19). It regulated almost every aspect of the lives of the people living in it. In most plantation systems labour has been immigrant and ethnically different from the indigenous population. This was the situation in Sri Lanka too; segregated from the rest of the society by the system of production, by ethnic characteristics, by the lack of citizenship rights, plantation labour was necessarily confined within the plantation system. In this sense, although plantations have been described as a 'modern' sector of the economy when compared with the peasant sector and with a wage labour relationship, this labour was not 'free' in the strict sense. It did not have the freedom to sell labour freely. It was in reality a captive labour force confined to the plantation system.

The plantation system was also the basis for the type of consciousness which developed within this labour force. They have come to see their lives and their future as being closely linked with and dependent on the plantation system. This is not surprising for a population that lived and worked within the plantations for such a long time. The provision of jobs, living quarters, education and health facilities, the birth of their children, religious activities, and finally even the burial ground are all located within the plantation system. Therefore in the development of their identity, except for such characteristics as their language and religion, the association with the plantations is extremely strong.

Not only the consciousness of plantation labour, but also the prevalent attitudes of outsiders towards plantation labour were on the basis that they formed a part of the plantation system. They were considered as a form of 'captive labour' confined to the plantations, ethnically segregated, without citizenship rights and therefore with a limited role in the wider society. In this context trade unionism has been the most important form of organised action; union mobilisation has been high and through this form of struggle certain rights have been secured. Other social action groups working among them have concentrated on improvement of their living conditions. Behind both these strategies - unionisation and welfare work - there is the implicit recognition that this section of labour are an ethnic minority without political rights and are more or less confined to the plantations. Therefore all attempts are limited either to winning them certain concessions making use of the fact that they are in an organised sector with a legal structure of labour laws or to improving their living standards within the confines of the plantation system. This approach to plantation labour is despite the fact that they form the working class in a major sector of the economy. As organised labour in this all important sector of the economy they wield considerable power. However strategies of working among them have not paid attention to using this power in a political sense.

* The term Indian Tamil labour is used in this paper with some hesitation. There is a growing demand from the more politically articulate sections of this population to use the term 'Hill country Tamils' or 'Kandyan Tamils' instead of the term Indian Tamils. This reflects a need for a new identity among this population once they have been given Sri Lankan citizenship. These tendencies in identity formation are discussed later in this paper. However the term Indian Tamils is used here for the sake of clarity keeping in mind a wider audience, but the author has no objections if the term Indian Tamils is replaced by the term 'Hill country Tamils' wherever it appears.

However the plantation system in Sri Lanka has not remained static over the years. The system that began with private capital and a captive labour force of Indian Tamil origin has undergone significant changes. The state take over of the plantations through nationalisation and granting of citizenship rights to a section of the plantation population, have changed the character of the plantation system fundamentally. These changes have had an impact on various aspects of the lives of the Indian Tamil plantation labour, including their role in the political arena. This has been supplemented by the emergence of the ethnic conflict as a major contradiction in the Sri Lankan society.

- Contradictions of Nationalisation

'Nationalisation' or state take over of various sectors of the economy was an idea first put forward by leftist political parties of Sri Lanka in keeping with the state ownership model of socialism that developed in what one social scientist has called 'actually existing socialist countries' (20). This idea had its influence on newly independent Third World countries which were basically functioning under a capitalist framework. Intervention of the state was legitimised not only as a means of economic growth but also as an instrument of social transformation towards socialism. In addition many arguments of social justice were brought forward to justify it. According to this argument state intervention was a means of rectifying social injustices. Some leftist ideologues termed it as a 'non capitalist path of development' to distinguish it from the capitalism traditionally based on private capital and from 'socialism' of 'actually existing socialist countries'. This term also implied that this 'non capitalist sector' would play a positive role in the transformation to socialism.

In the case of Sri Lanka the idea of 'nationalisation' was taken up by populist elements of various political colouring. Basically it advocated a change of ownership from private to state, and in some instances an expansion of the role of state into new areas within a capitalist framework. Through this intervention of the state what emerged was what is now called the 'corporation' sector, which is a form of existence of state capitalism. Although often put forward as a step towards socialism, the corporation sector of Sri Lanka in no way changed the ownership structures so as to bring about a transformation of production relations for the benefit of the working people. Its main achievement has been to maintain a state capitalist sector and perhaps helped to generate a new bureaucratic class linked to it.

The state take over of various sectors of the economy in a society like Sri Lanka is backed by certain socio-political and ideological forces. It serves the interests of various groups in society. For certain sections of the ruling classes of Sri Lanka, who find themselves as members of the ruling group at a particular time, the State is the major channel for capital accumulation and for the appropriation of other resources. Lacking their own means of accumulation, state take over of various sectors of the economy becomes a major channel for their accumulation and mobility. The State sector also serves their more short term needs; it enables them to maintain their political base through the distribution of benefits to their constituencies. This forms the basis for the political patronage system operating through the state sector.

Other than these class forces, the expansion of the state into various sectors of the economy was also backed by nationalist and sometimes populist ideologies. Taking over of sectors of the economy hitherto dominated by foreign capital and other 'alien' elements is the ideological argument put forward. These arguments have been used by the ruling classes when intervening in many areas of the economy. The very word 'nationalisation' reflects this nationalist ideology.

Nationalisation of the plantations was a measure motivated by both these class and nationalist/populist elements and interests. It transferred the bulk of the land owned by

Agency Houses to two State Corporations. They are now run as state capitalist ventures. By this an important sector of the economy came under state control and under class forces dominating the state. As shown by Table 4 around one third of the total plantation acreage is now under state control. However when it comes to Tea, which is the industry employing the bulk of the labour force, around two third of the acreage is under state ownership. This also means that close to 85% of the labour employed in the plantation sector comes under the state.

Table 4

Distribution Plantation Acreage by ownership categories (1981)

	Tea%	Rubber%	Coconut%	All Crops%
State Plantations	61.5	32	10	29
Private Estates	17.0	20	30	24
Small Holdings	21.5	48	60	47
Total extent (ha)	244,840	208,420	445,000	894,550

Source: D.Wesumperuma, W.Gooneratne - Plantation Agriculture in Sri Lanka - An overview of Employment and Development prospects - in "Plantation Agriculture in Sri Lanka - Issues in Employment and Development" - ILO-ARTEP-Bangkok-1984

The take over of plantations marked almost the end of the long period of expansion of state sector in the economy. But it was also a taking over of a very important sector . From then onwards this sector was also available as a source of political patronage and accumulation for the political forces controlling the state.

The take over of plantations was also an appeasement of a nationalist demand by taking over a sector that was brought into this country through colonialism and identified with foreign control. It was taking over of a major symbol of colonialism. To the nationalist forces backing the state take over, even the labour force working in plantations was 'alien' and brought in by foreigners. As the ideological argument goes the plantation were in land traditionally owned by up country Sinhalese. This land was taken over by colonial powers and plantations established and they also brought in and settled an 'alien' population in them. Therefore taking over of these estates by a state supported largely by Sinhala nationalist forces, was a manifestation of nationalism as well.

Certainly there have been many positive developments in the living and working conditions of the plantation labour during the post-nationalisation period. However this is more a result of the newly acquired political power enjoyed by this population rather than a direct consequence of them coming under state control. The state ownership did not bring about any changes in their structural position within the system of production. They still form an exploited workforce within a state capitalist system. Many problems of this population arise from this structural position of the plantation labour. In addition as we shall show the growth of the influence of Sinhala nationalist forces dominating the state in the estate sector had a negative impact of the plantation labour. This shows the contradictory character of 'nationalisation'. An understanding of these contradictions is necessary for a proper 'evaluation' of 'nationalisation'.

The contradictory character of state take over of plantations was demonstrated at the very early stages of nationalisation when violence erupted in plantations. In some areas take over

of plantations was accompanied with demonstrations and marches into plantations organised by Sinhala nationalist elements. Workers were ejected from estates in Kandy, Gampola, Kotmale, Matale and Nawalapitiya areas. On 11th March 1972, when workers were protesting against the mode of land alienation at Devon estate, a young estate labourer was shot dead by the police. This was followed by looting and attacks on plantation workers in Delta, North Tea and Sanger estates.(21) There is much evidence to show that, at the time of the take over of land after nationalisation Indian Tamil plantation workers were at the receiving end of racist attacks inspired by Sinhala nationalist elements. This was actually the beginning of a phase of ethnic violence in the plantation sector.

The other contradiction of the early stages of nationalisation arose from the fact that plantation labour was discriminated against in the new forms of management that was introduced into some estates taken over. Land reform saw some of the estates coming under co-operative forms of management. Stateless Indian labour was debarred from membership of these cooperatives. At the same time the trade union rights that so far existed in the estates taken over by these cooperatives also got suspended. " Of these institutions Usawasama* managed nearly 240 properties covering about 35,208 ha.... and electoral level co-op managed about 68,798 ha of estate land.'...'In early 1977 there were some 195 Janawasas covering an area of about 20,000 ha."(22)

These new forms of management were motivated by a desire to transform the highly hierarchichal forms of plantation management that existed in the plantation sector. The idea was to allow 'greater participation' of the workforce in the management structures. However backed only by Sinhala nationalist forces these 'progressive' motivations could not include the minority Indian Tamil working class who have laboured in these estates for generations. This shows the contradictions of a seemingly 'progressive' idea when it cannot cross an ethnic barrier and excludes the working people directly attached to the industry. In other words however much there was a desire for 'participation' in the new management structures that could not be brought about once people who have worked in these estates were debarred. On the other hand these measures actually turned out to be discriminatory against these workers.

Although these early problems of nationalisation were somewhat rectified with the change of government and scrapping of these cooperative forms of management, they show the contradictions that underlie the nationalisation process backed by nationalist and populist forces. So far as the plantations retained the 'enclave' character under the ownership of private capital either foreign or local, they were somewhat insulated from the pressures of 'outside' forces. State take over meant an opening of these estates to 'outside forces', specially to those enjoying state power. This had the potential of going against the interests of the Indian Tamil labour who lacked citizenship rights, political rights and also belonged to a minority ethnic group.

The same process is seen in the pressures for employment and in the demand for estate land for various purposes from the adjoining rural sector. This too was a result of the 'opening up' that 'nationalisation' brought about. Table 5 given below shows the changes in the composition of the labour force in a selected sample of state owned estates between 1975 and 1978. "Absorption of village labour was greater in low-grown and mid-grown areas where villages are located in close proximity to estates." (23) The other important tendency was the recruitment of village labour for such middle level supervisory grade jobs like field supervisors, creche attendants, etc.. This not only limited the opportunities for mobility for estates workers, but also placed recently recruited village labour from Sinhala background in a supervisory grade above the Indian Tamil labour. There is a lot of evidence to show that this situation has led to tensions in the estate sector. (24)

Table 5

Changes in the Composition of the Labour Force, 1975 & 1978
(Percentage of total labour force)

Estate	1975-pre reform		1978-post reform	
	Non-resident Sinhala	Resident Tamil	Non-resident Sinhala	Resident Tamil
Allerton	15	85	22	78
Helbodde	9	91	14	86
Delta	11	89	17	83
Kelliawatte	0	100	20	80
Passara	2	98	8	92
Dickwella	14	86	25	75

Sources: N.A.Pernando - op.cit.-1984

These pressures for employment continued even after 1977 under the UNP government. "In 1977, the Ministry of Plantation Industries issued a directive to all public sector estates to increase their employment rates to 3.71 labour units per ha of Tea and 1.85-2.47 labour units per ha of rubber. In response to this many JEDB and SPC estates increased employment in 1977 and 1978 by recruiting more village labour, though in many cases this may have led to redundant labour." (25) According to the Central Bank Report of 1969, 69% of the total increase of new employment opportunities was in these two state corporations. (26)

As a result of the influx of village labour into the estate sector there is a sizeable proportion of non- resident village labour in the state owned plantation sector. Table 6 illustrates this for SLSPC and JEDB. These tables clearly shows that Board regions that falls within the Central Province (Hatton, Matale, Nuwara Eliya and Haputale for SLSPC and Hatton, Nuwara Eliya and Nawalapitiya for JEDB) still depend largely on resident Indian Tamil labour force. These are mainly up country estates cultivating Tea. On the other hand estates of Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Southern Provinces are the areas where there is a significant proportion of non-resident village labour. The same is true of estates of the Kalutara, Kurunegala and Puttalam districts. The areas where there is a greater proportion of Sinhala labour also show a mixed cropping pattern.

In interpreting this data it must be remembered that a part of the plantation sector had Sinhala labour coming from the villages working in them long before 'nationalisation'. This is specially true of the Coconut estates in the Kurunegala and Puttalam districts and also of estates of the Southern Province and Kalutara districts. Therefore it is the estates in Uva, Sabaragamuwa Provinces and to a lesser extent estates of the Southern Province where there has been an increase in non- residential labour to a significant degree.

Table 6

SLSPC (1980)

Board Region	Resident '000 (a)	Non-resident '000 (b)	Total '000 (c)	Ratio (a/c)
Hatton	35	0.1	35.1	1.00
Matale	24	6.6	30.6	0.78
N'Eliya	28	0.3	28.3	0.98
Haputale	23	6.2	29.2	0.77
Balangoda	19	11.4	31.4	0.61
Kalutara	13	12.3	25.3	0.51
Ratnapura	15	7.2	23.2	0.65
Galle/Matara	15	25.3	40.3	0.37
Total	172	69.4	241.4	0.71

Source: MTIP - Social Welfare Programme Project - General Plan of Operation - April 1980
p.15JEDB(1987)

Board Region	Resident (a)	Non-resident (b)	Total (c)	Ratio (a/c)
Hatton	29709	919	30628	0.96
Avissawella	13832	12092	25924	0.53
Nuwara Eliya	48476	4501	52977	0.92
Kandy	14239	3581	17820	0.79
Badulla	44274	14501	58775	0.75
Nawalapitiya	16711	2693	19594	0.85
Kegalle	7994	7550	15544	0.53
Kurunegala	1328	1053	2381	0.56
Chilaw	1094	751	1845	0.59
Total	177619	47869	225488	0.78

Source: Housing Needs Assessment - JEDB - 1986

The shift towards greater proportions of the Sinhala ethnic group has taken place not only in the workforce, but also in the resident population living in the estates. Table 7 shows the change in the ethnic composition of estate population during the intercensal period, 1971 to 1981.

Table 7

Population change in the estate sector 1971-1981

District	Sinhalese			Tamil		
	1971	1981	% ch.	1971	1981	% ch.
Nuwara Eliya	26211	19658	-25.0	360457	287615	-20.2
Badulla	9540	12223	+ 28.1	197017	146102	-25.8
Kandy	13723	20006	+45.8	148891	104651	-29.7
Matale	3409	3675	+ 7.8	39298	25368	-35.4
Kegalle	10718	8989	-16.1	67031	45919	-31.5
Ratnapura	11268	12569	+11.5	111665	93403	-16.4
Kurunegala	9724	5129	-47.3	8042	5698	-29.1
Kalutara	9854	9287	-5.8	38411	34956	-9.0
Galle	9031	7657	-15.3	15662	13009	-16.4
Matara	4706	5290	+12.4	18566	14690	-20.9
Total	108184	104478	-3.4	1005040	771411	-23.2

Source: G.H.Pieris - Changing prospects of the Plantation Workers of Sri Lanka - 1988

This data shows that there has been a general reduction in the residential population of estates during the intercensal period. Estimates show "that about 98% of the overall reduction in the size of the estate population between 1971 and '81 is accounted for by the reduction in the number of Tamils." (9). 70% of the reduction of Indian Tamil population has come from three districts - Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kandy.

Part of the explanation for this reduction in the proportion of Indian Tamils in the estate is their repatriation under the Sirima- Shastri Pact. Some of the other explanations include drop in the productivity due to disruptions of the industry just after nationalisation. While these explanations account partly for the reduction in the proportion of Indian Tamils, it is also true that the plantation sector continues to be under pressure for employment from village labour and some of them have been settling in the estates. The increase in the proportion of Sinhala labour settling in estates has been significant for Kandy, Badulla, Matara, Ratnapura and Matale districts.

Another important factor explaining the drop in this residential labour force is by the drop in the extent of land available for plantation crops and the resulting drop in employment opportunities. This brings us to the question of pressure for estate land from 'outside'. Table 8 gives the drop in land under plantation crops shown by Agricultural Census for respective years.

Table 8

Extent of land under the main plantation crops in the Estate Sector

	hectares		
	1973	1982	% change
Tea	187,128	128,230	-31.5
Rubber	102,259	60,459	-40.9
Coconut	40,927	13,701	-66.5

Estate land has been taken over for various purposes under different programmes sponsored by the government. Various crop diversification programmes, village expansion schemes, settlement of people under different circumstances have claimed estate land. Once the land was taken over by the state under land reform laws of the seventies they were readily available for for these purposes. The same land reform laws debarred the bulk of the Indian Tamil labour from owning land because of their 'statelessness'. Thus they were not entitled for land under these schemes.

An ideological basis for the demand for estate land also comes from a historical grievance of Kandyan Sinhalese. It is based on land being taken away from them for the establishment of plantations. Whatever may be the empirical basis of this claim, the important issue is the ideological force behind this claim. All the elements that go to make land as a base for ethnic conflicts are found in this grievance. In addition the Sinhala ethnic group has also wielded political power in order to redress these grievances.

Basically nationalisation can be viewed as a step that broke the 'enclave' character of the plantation system with the backing of Sinhala populist forces within a framework of capitalism. These 'outside' forces were able to influence the estate sector in this way mainly because of the political power they wield within the state and the status of 'statelessness' in the case of the plantation labour. But the latter is fast changing making the situation even more complex. Plantation labour has emerged as a political force due to several recent changes. We shall now turn to look at that process in more detail.

- Indian Tamils as a political force

- Electoral politics

The earlier analysis of plantation labour as a part of the estate system did not give much importance to them as a political force. This was mainly because of their lack of citizenship rights and voting rights. But this situation has changed significantly during the last decade. Three factors have contributed to this. These are a) Granting of citizenship rights to those sections of the Indian Tamil population remaining in Sri Lanka and their entry into electoral politics b) The strategic importance of Indian Tamils in a context of an aggravated ethnic conflict c) The impact of ethnic conflict on the political consciousness of this population.

The Sirima-Shastri Pact which was an agreement between India and Sri Lanka was opposed by the Ceylon Workers Congress, the biggest trade union in the plantation sector and virtually the principle political representative of the Indian Tamil population. However later on the CWC concentrated on getting Sri Lankan citizenship to as many Indian Tamils as possible, and expediting this process once the Pact became a fact of life in the Sri Lankan polity. This process got a boost once the CWC joined the UNP government as a coalition

partner in 1977. One of the results of CWC agitation was the enactment of an Act called Grant of citizenship to Stateless Persons Act No.5 of 1986 in February 1986 in order to grant Sri Lankan citizenship to a residual population of Indian Tamils whose fate was not decided by the Pact. The following figures give the situation regarding granting citizenship to these people at the time this Bill was brought to the parliament.

(By 30th January 1986)

(1)	No. applied for Sri Lankan citizenship	625,000
(2)	No. to be granted Sri Lankan citizenship	375,000
(3)	No. granted citizenship (Natural increase granted 68,500)	197,535
(4)	No. awaiting grant of citizenship on a ratio of 4 to 7 granted Indian citizenship	43,153

(1)	No. applied for Indian citizenship	506,000
(2)	No. to be granted Indian citizenship	600,000
(3)	No. granted citizenship (natural increase granted 170,582)	421,207
(4)	No. repatriated (natural increase repatriated 123,835)	337,066
(5)	No granted Indian citizenship and still remaining in Sri Lanka	84,141

According to government sources this meant that there was a residual of 94,000 whose fate was not decided either way. This was because only 506,000 applied for Indian citizenship, although the Indian quota according to the 1964 agreement was 600,000, leaving a balance of 94,000. It was to give these people Sri Lankan citizenship that a Bill was brought to the Parliament in January 1986. This meant a total of 469,000 people (375,000 + 94,000) and their natural increase was to be granted Sri Lankan citizenship. By 30th May 1987 the number that was granted Sri Lankan citizenship was 209,116 and their natural increase of 77,393. By March 1988 this has increased approximately to 223,000. This meant another 246,000 remained to be given Sri Lankan citizenship.

The CWC continued its campaign to expedite the process of granting of citizenship even after this Bill was enacted. According to this Bill which came into force on 18th February 1986 the granting of citizenship should have been completed within a period of 18 months, i.e. by 18th August 1987. But as the figures show this did not happen. The CWC 29th annual convention which was held from 13th to 14th March 1987 took up this issue and adopted a resolution pointing out that a practical way of solving the issue is to grant Sri Lankan citizenship to all persons other than 506,000 who had applied for Indian citizenship and at the same time register them as voters. This was a demand to do away with the administrative process involved in registering citizens. The main objective of this demand was to try and get as many people as possible into the electoral registers. In addition to putting forward this demand the convention also directed "The National and Executive Council (of the CWC) to call upon all Plantation workers to set apart 3 days from June 1st June 3rd for the purpose of obtaining divine guidance to strengthen and assist the Government in realising its' avowed objective of registering all persons entitled to be citizens as voters without further delay." (28) This was the second CWC call for a prayer campaign within a short period of time. The CWC had used this effectively in one instance already. This time also as soon as the prayer campaign was announced the government appointed a Cabinet Sub-Committee to look into the problems regarding the registration of citizens. The Cabinet Sub-Committee met a CWC delegation headed by Mr. Thondaman on 1st June

1987 and decided to take a test case of one large estate in order to identify the problems associated with granting of citizenship.

Certainly there were many practical problems that had arisen because of the long delay associated with the implementation of the Sirima-Shastri pact. People had applied for citizenship of the two countries long ago. Since then many changes have taken place in the lives of these people. Some have moved to different places of residence, some have been affected by ethnic riots and some have even migrated to India in times of trouble. It is in the context of this complicated situation that the CWC leadership put forward a new demand for overcoming the situation. The essence of this solution was to grant Indian citizenship to those who have migrated to India and wish to settle in India and "As against this Sri Lanka can register as Sri Lankan citizens all those now in the island, whether they are stateless, Indian citizens or prospective Sri Lankan citizens. This process can continue till Sri Lanka reaches its targeted figure of 469,000 and their natural increase.(29) Thondamen, the leader of the CWC put forward this idea during his visit to India in March 1988 when he met the Prime Minister of India. It was given wide publicity in India and there seem to be wide support to the idea in Tamil Nadu as well.

This long struggle of the Indian Tamil population to win citizenship rights scored a significant gain at the end of 1988 when a new Act called Grant of Citizenship to stateless persons (Special Provisions) Act was enacted. This Act simplified the procedures for granting of Sri Lankan citizenship to those who were eligible for it. At the time of the enactment of this Act 236,000 persons of Indian origin had been given Sri Lankan citizenship. This figure was given in the Act itself. This meant another 233,000 remained to be given the Sri Lankan.

A direct result of people of Indian Tamil origin becoming citizens is that they become a political force in the areas they inhabit. Population-wise there are several electoral districts where there is a concentration of Indian Tamils. In descending order of importance these are Nuwara Eliya (47.3%), Badulla (21.1%), Vavuniya (19.4%), Mullativu (13.9%), Mannar (13.2%), Ratnapura (11.1%), Kandy (9.3%), Matale (6.7%) and Kegalle (6.4%). These are figures from the 1981 Census. The actual proportion of Indian Tamils could be slightly higher than this because of the already mentioned tendency of some sections of this population to respond to census enumeration as Sri Lankan Tamils once they have obtained their Sri Lankan citizenship.

However the voting strength of this section of the population is much lower than what is indicated from the above figures of population proportions. There is still a large section of the Indian Tamil population who do not have citizenship rights and therefore the vote. " In 1976 when the number of Indian Tamils granted citizenship of Sri Lanka stood around 220,000 those among them with voting rights accounted for 20% or more of the total number of registered voters in 22 electorates in the plantation areas of the Central Highlands. (30) Table 9 gives the distribution of this strength in the electorates of Plantation Areas.

Table 9

Indian Tamil Registered voters in the Plantation Areas - 1977

Number of parliamentary electorates in which the Indian Tamils constituted			
	> 50% of the total registered votes	20-49% of the total registered votes	10-19% of the total reg.votes
Central P.	2	8	2
Uva P.	2	5	2
Sabaragamuwa P.	0	5	3

Source : Peiris G.H. - op.cit -1988

The total number of registered Indian Tamil voters at the time of the 1988 Presidential election was 356,000, which is about 3.8% of the total electorate. According to our estimates, at the time of this last Presidential and general elections there were three electoral districts (Kandy, Badulla and Ratnapura) with a 45,000-50,000 concentration of Indian Tamils votes and one other (Nuwara Eliya) with about 54,000 votes. More than these absolute figures what is more important is the percentage- wise concentration of the vote. In the case of Indian Tamils it is only in the Nuwara Eliya district there was enough concentration to elect a member from the community. Here about 24% of the registered vote is of an Indian Tamil ethnic character. However with the implementation of the new Bill this situation is bound to change.

The political behaviour of this newly emerging Indian Tamil voter will be extremely important, specially for ethnic politics of the Central Province. The Provincial Council, Presidential and general elections showed some of the emerging trends. The first round of Provincial Council elections saw the election of 15 members of Indian Tamil background as members to Provincial Councils. One more person had been appointed using the bonus seats. The following table gives the distribution of this membership.

Table 10

Central Province	Uva Provincial Council
7 CWC members	2 CWC members
2 USA members	
1 UNP member (appointed)	
Sabaragamuwa Province	Western Province
1 CWC member	2 CWC members
1 USA member	

12 of these 16 Provincial Council members of Indian Tamil background are CWC members, 3 are from the USA and 1 from the UNP. The Central Province is the most important Province for the Indian Tamil population where they have ten Provincial Council members out of a total of 56. In the new Provincial Council they had one Minister - S. Ramanathan, son of Thondaman who topped the preferential votes list in the Nuwara Eliya District with 25,436 votes.

In the general elections, the CWC put forward candidates in seven electoral districts under the UNP ticket. These were Colombo, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Kandy and

Matale. There were two more CWC candidates in the national list of UNP(31). Of these one was elected to parliament and two appointed through the national list. The elected member of the CWC, Sellasamy, was elected from the Colombo electoral district. Sellasamy was elected in Colombo not only because of the Indian Tamil vote. The proportion of the Indian Tamil vote is not high enough in Colombo to get a member elected even if all Indian Tamils vote for the CWC candidate. Sellasamy's appeal was wider. This shows a new dimension in the CWC politics.

In the case of other electoral districts it was the failure of CWC to get a person elected from the Nuwara Eliya electoral district that became a point of discussion in the analysis of general election results. The CWC spokesmen has attributed this to a failure of an electoral agreement with the UNP, lack of unity and needless infighting within the organisation. The CWC leadership came down strongly on party organisers because of this failure, but also carried out a reorganisation in party structures. In the Nuwara Eliya electoral district the 10,000 odd votes gained by DPLF was also a reason for the failure of the CWC. The DPLF had in its list a popular organiser of the CWC who was not given nomination in the CWC list for some reason or the other. This proved disadvantageous to the CWC.

Apart from these reasons, there also seems to be other reasons arising from electoral behaviour of the Indian Tamil population for the outcome in the Nuwara Eliya district. For example, the highest number of preferences received by a CWC candidate in Nuwara Eliya was 23,882. This is close to 25,436 - which was the highest figure obtained by a CWC candidate during Provincial Council elections. However both these figures are way below our estimate of 54,000 votes among the Indian Tamil population in the Nuwara Eliya electoral district. This gap between the available voting strength of Indian Tamils and the preferences received by the CWC is observed in other electoral districts as well. This was the most important reason why a CWC candidate was not elected from Nuwara Eliya electoral district.

There can be many factors explaining this discrepancy. Probably the answer is a combination of these. Some of the possible reasons are

- Due to several reasons the voter turnout rate among the Indian Tamil population is still low. Franchise is certainly a very new experience for a large number of Indian Tamil voters. This lack of experience in participating in elections, arrangements of the polling booths and the distances that have to be travelled to vote, can lead to a low turnout. Even the very fact that the CWC is not contesting independently can be one of the reasons for the low turnout. If the appeal of the CWC is mainly ethnic, its loss of identity by contesting under the UNP ticket can reduce the enthusiasm of the voter to come out and vote.

- Not all Indian Tamil voters vote with the CWC as it had happened in the Nuwara Eliya district this time.

- Not all Indian Tamil voters had cast their preferences. For example DPLF has received 10,509 votes. But even if all the preferences that DPLF members received came from separate individual voters, only about 3000 of them have cast their preferences.

Given these realities of the present strength of the Indian Tamil vote it is easy to understand the present strategy of CWC in not going alone to the elections, but contesting on the UNP ticket. The fact of the matter is, because of statelessness, there is still a large section of the Indian Tamil population without voting rights. Even in the 1977 the general elections, the CWC managed to get only one member elected from Nuwara Eliya/Maskeliya electorate. This was a multi-member constituency with three members and each voter having three votes. Even then Mr. Thondamen was elected as the third member. However the situation is bound to change with implementation of the Citizenship Act enacted in November 1988. By the next elections the voting strength of the Indian Tamil community will increase significantly.

Despite the fact that the CWC could get only one member elected to parliament, they have three members altogether, two being appointed through the national list. What is more, all these three members hold portfolios in the present government (one Minister, two Ministers of State) This shows the importance given by the UNP to this alliance with the CWC. Certainly by the time of the next elections, with most of the people of Indian Tamil origin getting citizenship, the importance of the CWC in the political arena will grow.

- Plantation labour as a working class

The political strength of the Indian Tamil voter will not only depend on their voting strength, although this is bound to increase with more and more of them getting Sri Lankan citizenship. The Indian Tamil labour is also the most numerous workforce in the all important plantation sector. This sector is still important in our economy. This labour force is highly unionised and has a long history of trade union struggles. Table 11 shows the strikes in the plantation sector since 1977. The main unions in the plantation sector and their political affiliations are given in Table 12.

Table 11

Strikes in the plantation sector

Year	No. of strikes	Workers involved	Man-days lost
1977	88	33586	188271
1978	118	56707	248573
1979	163	50969	238147
1980	202	75130	301671
1981	297	215072	455312
1982	188	74720	323440
1983	136	49863	204226
1984	213	79025	383640

Source: Statistical Abstracts 1985 - Department of Census and Statistics

Table 12

Name of Union	Political Party
Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC)	CWC
Lanka Jathika Estates Union (LJEW)	UNP
National Union of Workers (NUW)	
Ceylon Plantation Workers Union (CPWU)	Maoist group
Lanka Estate Workers Union	LSSP
United Plantation Workers Union (UPWU)	CP (Moscow)
Democratic Workers Union (DWC)	
New Red Flag Workers Union (NRFWU)	CP (Peking)
Ilankai Thilailalar Kazhagam (ITK)	TULF

Although there was a semblance of industrial peace, specially after the government managed to crush the General strike of 1980, the available data shows that industrial action has been a common thing in the plantation sector. Most of these strikes are concerned with very

specific issues regarding living and working conditions. Very often these strikes are confined to few estates or sometimes a single estate. However the cumulative picture is significant. It shows the prevalence of trade union traditions in the plantation sector. The statistics also show the sharp increase in the number of strikes in 1981. Perhaps this is related to the ethnic violence that affected the estate sector at that time. This was the first large scale attack on Indian Tamil labour during recent times.

Of the unions in the plantation sector the CWC and LJEW are the main ones having the largest number in terms of membership. NUW, UPWU, DWC and NRFU are the other unions showing a presence of any significant degree. The USA members from the Indian Tamil background elected as Provincial Council members are activists from some of these other unions. With long established trade unions, organised working class action has been a common feature in the plantation sector.

During the last decade at least two of the plantation unions have become powerful organisations. These are the CWC and the LJEW. Their own strength and also access to state patronage have been the most important reasons for this. This growth has certainly enhanced the capacity of these organisations to put pressure on the government and win certain demands for the benefit of the plantation workers. They have certainly achieved significant successes in winning concessions within the existing framework.

However as pointed out by several authors (32), (33) these established powerful unions have also become much more linked to the 'system' and their capacity to respond to the growing political consciousness of the Indian Tamil labour can be in question. One basic reason for this is of course the close link of these unions to the ruling group. Whatever concessions one might win with this arrangement, such a position when maintained for many years develops many structural links with the establishment which can make it difficult for the organisation to go beyond a particular framework. Unions too are hierarchical internally, reflecting internal social differentiation within the Indian Tamil population. They have developed a cadre for whom the organisation is a means of social mobility and a means of access to state patronage and resources of various kind. Such a cadre might be more interested in keeping the structural linkages with the establishment that allows them to keep their positions rather than responding to radicalising tendencies in political consciousness.

The more radical tendencies in political consciousness among the plantation labour is linked to their ethnic consciousness and to the accentuation of ethnic identities in the present historical context of Sri Lanka. It is not that ethnic identity is absent even during trade union struggles of the plantation labour. In fact it is the appeal of the ethnic identity that allows the plantation labour to come together in working class struggles when different unions present in the plantations cannot agree on certain struggles because of their varying political affiliations. This was demonstrated during the 1984 wage struggle. However the ethnic consciousness seem to be evolving into a qualitatively new stage due to recent developments. It is the capacity of the established unions to respond to the radicalisation coming from this that is in question.

- Security of Plantation labour, Ethnic consciousness and political violence

The Indian Tamils who lived largely in the estates had a permanency of residence in the estates where they lived as long as they had employment in the plantations. They are the only ethnic group in Sri Lanka in such a situation. Therefore loss of employment in the estates will also mean that they will be uprooted from the places where they have been resident up to now. The same is achieved by the reduction of the land available for the plantation sector. In other words the encroachments into estate sector by 'outside forces' have far reaching implications for the Indian Tamil population. It basically affects their security of residence and their ability to reside in places where they have lived for generations. Thus it becomes a basic issue of security of an ethnic group.

The sensitivity of this issue came to light in the recent controversy over settlement of earthslip victims in Kotmale on land taken over from estates. The CWC was quick to react against any attempt to settle people in estate land amidst plantation population. The issue led to differences of opinion in the cabinet between Thondaman and Gamini Dissanayake.-(34)

The demand put forward by the CWC to vest the ownership of the line rooms in the people who had lived in them for a long time can be seen as a move to ensure the permanency of residence of the plantation people in the area where they live. If the houses and the plot of land surrounding them are vested with the plantation workers their residence in the estate area will no longer be conditional on employment in the estates. This demand was put forward during the 25th convention of the CWC held in Kandy in February 1976. This was reiterated during the 29th convention which was held in 1987.(35) The chief guest of this session was Mr. J.R.Jayewardene, former President. Further representation were made by the CWC to Mr. Premadasa, who succeeded Mr. Jayewardene as the leader of the UNP.

What is important to note is that the implications of this process are far wider than the 'extent' to which this 'encroachment of outside forces' has taken place to the detriment of the interests of Indian Tamil plantation labour. Some of the more empiricist analysis of this question tries to take comfort by arguing that these tendencies are not of a significant scale. For example it has been pointed out that 'in the main tea plantation districts of the country (Nuwara Eliya and Badulla which in 1981 accounted for 52% of the total estate population in Sri Lanka) the intercensal decline in the extent of land covered by estates was only about 18%' (36). However insignificant the extent might be, it signifies a process that has all the elements that can contribute to a new phase of the ethnic conflict.

There are two contending ethnic groups in this conflict- one with a historical grievance regarding land taken over from them and the other having fears about permanency of residence in the areas where they live at present due to what they perceive as entry of 'outsiders'. This could easily take the character of another conflict for land and permanency of residence in another part of the country fuelled by ethnic ideologies.

This is not an argument for restricting the employment or land in the estate sector solely for Indian Tamil plantation labour. Social changes within this population itself will push them out of this sector. There are signs of this process already visible. But the objective here is to point out the contradictions generated by the state take over of plantations and opening of the plantations to 'outside' forces that accompanied it. What we are trying to show is that the influences of these forces has a potentiality to generate a conflict that will be disastrous in the context of the ethnic conflict prevailing in our society today. It also questions the seemingly 'progressive' arguments that were put forward to justify state take over of plantations. It is more a part of the expansion of the state capitalist sector supported by nationalist forces as well. Its impact on plantation labour shows all the contradictions associated with such a step.

These changes are now happening in a context where the ethnic conflict has become a major contradiction in our society. This has influenced the political consciousness of the plantation labour. The ethnic conflict reached the high point that we see today because of the grievances of Sri Lankan Tamils. Although there are identity differences between the latter and the Indian Tamils any further aggravation of the conflict can very easily engulf the Indian Tamils as well. If this happens the instability will spread to the central part of the country and into an important sector of our economy. This gives a strategic importance to the plantation labour.

In the earlier section we discussed the takeover of estates as a form of entry of 'outside forces' into the plantation sector with the intervention of the state. As already mentioned

this process was also marked by certain violent incidents in which the estate population was thrown out of the estates. Since then the estate sector has not been spared in the general escalation of violent processes that had characterised the Sri Lankan polity in recent times. The estate population were victims of pogroms in 1977, 1981 and 1983. Such incidents would have displaced some sections of the Indian Tamil population permanently from the estate sector. They have motivated some others to opt for Indian citizenship or to move into more safe areas. However the situation seem to show new tendencies in more recent times . The estate population has begun to resist violence against them using more militant forms of action. This tendency came into the news in early 1986 in certain parts of the hill country when estate people resisted violence against them. Such developments are important indicators of future political tendencies in plantations if problems are not resolved in time. As we have already mentioned the growth of these violent processes has contributed to making the Central Province an ethnically segregated area. It is in such an area that any further aggravation of conflict will occur.

Ethnic segregation of the Province on one hand and the possibility of access to land and the question of permanency of residence becoming a major controversy is a very good basis for ethnic politics to develop. This has developed the ground for the entry of several Tamil militant groups into the plantation areas and also for a more militant articulation of Indian Tamil Ethno- nationalism.

Of the Northern militant groups EROS had a political position that gave importance to plantation labour right from the beginning. ENDLF, EPRLF and the PFLT, which is the political party launched by PLOTE have also interest in working in the plantation areas. PFLT offered its ticket to Chandrasegaram during the last general election. He has been a long time worker for the CWC but later broke away from the latter. The Up Country People's Front is a new and more militant organisation that has emerged in plantation areas under the leadership of Chandrasegaram. The leadership of this organisation is primarily from plantation areas.

These developments brings in development of plantation politics to a qualitatively a new stage. On one hand a more radical leadership is emerging from the plantation background. Secondly as shown by documents put out by these organisations there are new concerns about such issues like the security of residence in the areas where plantation people have lived for such a long time and political power in these areas within a framework of devolution of power.

In addition to the traditional issues the new militancy in the plantation sector differs because it is now articulated in association with growing identity of an ethnic nature. These new assertions of identity reject the use of the term 'Indian Tamils' with good reasons. Historically the second class status of this population was closely linked with this prefix Indian. With the granting of Sri Lankan citizenship there is an attempt by politically articulated sections of this population to identify themselves as 'Hill country Tamils'. This on one hand removes the Indian connections and on the other hand gives them an identity distinct from other Tamil speaking ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

The dynamism of this new identity is also linked to a desire for a permanent home or a place of residence. Most of the more militant political groups see the Nuwara Eliya district where there is a concentration of this population as such an area. Hence the demand for a certain degree of autonomy for this district within a framework of Provincial Councils. Socio-economically we can link these tendencies with the sense of insecurity that the plantation people are facing as a result of the demands on estate land which we have already discussed.

It might be certainly true that the influence of these more militant organisations expressing a more radical form of ideology is still small and insignificant. However there are several

reasons to believe that it will grow in the future. The first reason is of course the possible deterioration of objective conditions in these areas introducing new issues like access to land as a base for conflict. This we have discussed in the earlier sections of this paper. Secondly, due to a certain degree of social mobility plantation people do have a younger leadership who have some level of education and are able to articulate the political needs of this population in radical terms. Their numbers might be small absolutely, as well as in percentage terms. However their ideologies are different and they might not be so amenable to coalition politics with the established parties, in the same way as the CWC. The experience of other countries as well as the experience in Sri Lanka among the other ethnic groups show the key role played by such group. Some of them have already faced state repression and have suffered at the hands of Sinhala chauvinism. There is a significant number of people of the Indian Tamil background in the Northern Province, specially in the Vavuniya district. They have been in the middle of the ethnic conflict. Thus plantation areas have both objective and subjective factors that can help to develop a more militant form of ethno-nationalism.

The militancy affecting plantation areas took a new turn recently with the emergence of the issue of repatriation of Indian passport holders. The number is estimated to be around 100000. While the Sri Lankan government is keen to restart the repatriation process, the more militant sections of the Indian Tamil political spectrum are opposing it. In addition to the above mentioned Tamil militant groups, the LTTE has also joined the agitation for this cause. With the latter's dominant position in the North and East, they will be able to bring much more pressure on the government on this question. It is clear that the repatriation of the Indian passport holders has become a critical issue in plantation politics. The sensitivity of the issue is such that even the more moderate organisations like the CWC will have to take up this question.

The Kandyan peasantry

The Central Province is also the home of the Kandyan Sinhalese with a specific regional identity which is closely linked to land. Kandyan Sinhalese of the Central Province also have grievances over land due to development during the colonial period. It is based on land being taken away from them for the establishment of plantations. Whatever may be the empirical basis of this claim, the important issue is the ideological element behind this. All the elements that go to make land as a base for ethnic conflicts are found in this grievance.

While the historical grievances over land can provide an ideological base for a future conflict, what is also important are the prevailing socio-economic conditions in the rural areas of the Central Province. Tables 13 and 14 summarises some of the available socio-economic data for the three districts.

Table 13**Occupation structure - Central Province**

(% of employed population)	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya
Administrative & managerial	0.7	0.5	0.2
Professional, technical & related	7.6	5.0	2.1
Clerical and related workers	5.9	3.9	3.0
Sales workers	10.0	6.9	3.4
Service workers	5.9	4.1	2.7
Agricultural, animal husbandry & forestry workers	41.6	58.5	77.6
Production & related workers transport equipment operators	26.5	19.4	9.2
Workers not classified by occupation	1.7	1.7	1.7

Source : Census of population and housing 1981

Based on these data the principle socio-economic characteristics of the three districts which comprise the Central Province can be summarised as follows;

Matale - The Dry Zone district of Matale has more land, and land holdings are relatively larger. Agricultural development can take place with the provision of facilities like irrigation. However being situated near densely populated wet zone districts like Kandy where land holding sizes are smaller, the land in this area comes under pressure due to migration of population . Any development of productive forces in agriculture is bound to be accompanied with processes leading to social polarisation and loss of land from the small peasantry as it has happened in other dry zone agricultural districts. Therefore even if the agriculture in these areas presents some hope, it will simultaneously generate social contradictions.

The District is relatively less urbanised and a larger proportion of the population depend on agriculture as the main means of livelihood. Like the other districts of the Province almost half the operators in paddy do not own land. Bulk of the cultivation is on a subsistence and depend on family labour.

Table 14

Agricultural population - Central Province

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya
% of agricultural household population to total population	54.6	74.8	34.0
% of agricultural operators whose occupation is only agriculture	43.4	61.6	60.1
Area operated by the above category	59.8	74.5	74.3
% of operators owning paddy holdings	54.9	56.7	50.2
% of paddy holdings < 1 Acre	64.4	46.5	59.2
% holdings where entire work is done by household members	75.6	84.3	62.9
Area covered by the above category	61.7	75.0	56.3
% of holdings producing mainly for home consumption	67.5	77.7	57.1
Area covered by the above category	50.9	65.6	55.0

Source : Agricultural Census 1982

Kandy - Kandy is the more urbanised district and the occupation pattern shows a larger share of the population depending on non- agricultural means of livelihood. Still close to half the population of the district falls into the category of Agricultural households. The holding sizes in agriculture are relatively smaller compared to holding sizes in the adjoining Matale district. Cultivation is of a subsistence nature and even if there is any growth in agriculture it will benefit more the people having relatively large plots. For the majority of population in these parts the future lies in various forms of wage labour either in the agricultural or non-agricultural sectors. The pressure for jobs and land in the plantation sector emanates largely from this district. It is more densely populated.

Nuwara Eliya - In the Nuwara Eliya district around 34% of the population fall into agricultural households occupied in small holder agriculture. Agriculture has characteristics similar to that in Kandy district being based on very small holdings and cultivation of a subsistence nature with family labour. In addition small holder agriculture here faces lots of disadvantages because of being hemmed in by plantations. This gives no room for expansion.

Writing in 1951, the Report of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission, noted the following with regard to the conditions of the rural population in Kandyan areas. " The pressure on land, aggravated by the growth of population has placed an intolerable burden on the village household. There are more mouths to feed, but no land to cultivate and no housing accomodation. Apart from low levels of living standards and insanitary houses...which must necessarily reflect adversely on moral and social standards, the want of food and employment has led the village population to seek any possible method of escape..." (37)

Later studies(38) have noted the aggravation of these socio- economic problems and high level of politicisation of rural areas in general and prevalence of similar situations in Kandyan

areas. The major tendencies and the contributory factors responsible for the worsening of the socio-economic conditions of the rural population over the years are:

- The growth of the population and the concomitant fragmentation of agricultural land especially in the wet zone and the emergence of a sizeable landless population;
- The decline of the importance of paddy and the growing importance of cash crops as a source of agricultural income, especially in the wet zone;
- The increasing dependence on various forms of wage labour including wage labour outside paddy cultivation as a means of livelihood
- Development of capitalist relations in the countryside coupled with social polarisations that goes along with it;
- The high level of politicisation and influence of politics in general, in the affairs of the rural society.

Similar processes characterise the rural sector of the Central Province as well. This is the basis for the pressures on the plantation sector to act as an employment generator for the rural population as well as to provide land for the purpose of easing the landlessness situation. However it is extremely difficult to expect the plantation sector to yield to these pressures and remain viable. Overstaffing and high proportion of the cost of labour leading to high production costs are the main factors reducing the profit margins and viability of the plantation sector. Therefore the capacity of the plantation sector to be a source of employment is limited. Similarly there cannot be further reduction of land coming under plantations without seriously affecting the industry as well as creating further complications in ethnic relations. Both these tendencies tend to go against the interests of the plantation labour.

Regional Sinhala elite

The emerging political tendencies among the Sinhalese of the Central Province can be considered under two headings; 1) the politics of the regional Sinhala elite that articulates themselves through electoral politics. This electoral politics now operate at two levels - national and provincial. 2) the more militant and violent form nationalist politics represented by organisations like Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna as a political force among the Sinhalese.

Apart from the dynamics of ethnic politics the demand for the Centre to give up some of its controls also comes from the traditional political leadership that emerges from the periphery through the electoral process. In the case of Sri Lanka this is mainly reflected in the attempts by politicians at the periphery to gain control over the development programmes carried out in the areas where they come from. This has been noted by some of the studies done on decentralisation and devolution from an administrative perspective. Wanasinghe(39) for example characterised decentralisation programmes as evolving through three phases. "The first phase from 1965 to 1970, was characterised by attempts to decentralise the implementation(?) decision making, whilst locating co-ordination of development activities to the district level. The second phase saw two basic policy thrusts. One was a move to provide political content to the decentralise co-ordination system. Another was to strengthen the decentralised system by providing it with financial resources through the introduction of a decentralised budget. The third phase, which is still in its evolutionary phase, has sought to consolidate the political control over the decentralised system as well as to explore ways and means of involving people more directly in the decentralised system." It is this last phase according to this analysis that has evolved now to establish structures with legislative powers at the periphery. Thus these earlier exercises

in decentralisation has been accompanied by a struggle of the politicians at the periphery not only to get a certain degree independence from the centre, but also to assert their authority over the administrative structures at the peripheral level.

Although the phenomenon of the presence and assertion of regional politics had been noted in some of these analyses of decentralisation others have ignored this by analysing it as 'political interference'. However this is to miss the main point by making politics some sort of an 'external' factor. Generally politics is not something that 'interferes' from outside but is a dimension that is always there. What is needed is a deeper understanding of the social processes that generate regional politics.

Such an analysis should throw more light on the contradictions between the interests of this newly emerging political leadership at the periphery and the interests of the centre. In the case of the Central Province this is important because of the presence of a regional identity - Kandyan Sinhalese in the Central Province. Historically Kandyan Sinhalese have expressed their interests and demands as a separate group. However since independence there had been a process through which a single Sinhala identity had emerged. The ability of the political parties that ruled the centre to incorporate the interests of all Sinhalese had been an important factor in this. In other words the post-independence political formations of Sri Lanka had the ability to cross the identity barriers between low country and up country Sinhalese. This is precisely what has not happened in the case of some minority ethnic groups (Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils) or might have happened inadequately in the case of others (Muslims).

However the future of political articulation at the regional level poses many interesting questions. Regional autonomies do have the possibility of strengthening regional identities. Especially with a regional identity that has a long history politics of the Sinhalese in the Central Province can lead to a rearticulation of the Kandyan Sinhalese identity and interests in a new form. There is very room for this if the contradictions between regional and central interests are not resolved amicably or if the socio-economic contradictions affecting the region deepen.

Finally the present political crisis in Sri Lanka has given rise to a more militant form of politics that uses extra-parliamentary methods and violence in order to achieve the political ends. It already has a history extending to several years. Central Province was also affected very much by this form of politics. Available sets of data such as monthly data presented to the parliament during emergency debates shows that Matale and Kandy are two districts affected very much by the insurgent violence of 1988 and 1989. The same is indirectly confirmed by the low voter turn rates in these districts during the Presidential and General elections of December 1988 and February 1989.

Ethnic politics and the Muslim population

Muslims form the second most important ethnic minority within the Central Province. They form 7.3 per cent of the Provincial population. District wise they have a ten percent share of the population in the Kandy district and 7 per cent in the Matale district. As shown by the data from the last islandwide census the level of urbanisation of the Muslim population is high. According to this census 42.7% of the Muslims lived in urban areas whereas the national average was 21.5%. Districts like Colombo, Galle and Kalutara have 99%, 72% and 72% of its Muslim population classified as urban.

Compared to this the proportion of urban population in the Central Province is lower. Table 15 below gives data for the three districts and for the Central Province.

Table 15

	Kandy	Matale	Nuwara Eliya	C.P.
Total Muslim pop.	112052	25836	14668	152556
Total urban pop.	24336	8360	3422	36118
Percentage	21.7	32.4	23.3	23.7

This probably reflects the history of the settlement of Muslim population in the Kandy district, where the bulk of the Muslim population of the province is found. Muslims in this district settled during the period of the Kandyan Kingdom and they have integrated themselves well into the rural society. This results in a relatively large percentage of a rural Muslim population in the Kandy district. In contrast to this, in districts like Galle and Colombo where the settlement of the Muslim population was linked to trade one finds a greater concentration of this ethnic group in the urban centres.

As far as recent political tendencies are concerned an important development has been the emergence of separate Muslim political parties. There are now two political parties identified as Muslim political parties. These are the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Muslim United Liberation Front. Although both these are recognised as phenomena that originated from the Eastern Province, and therefore reflect the developments in that area, their emergence is nevertheless significant. It is a departure from the hitherto prevalent Muslim practice of expressing themselves politically by being members of one of the major political parties. This desire for a separate Muslim political party seem to have some support in areas other than the East. For example a sample survey done during a recent study⁽⁴⁰⁾ showed that only about 14 per cent of the sample questioned in the Central Province did not want a separate Muslim party and also thought it would not benefit the Muslims. Close to 29 per cent on the other hand wanted one and a similar proportion thought that it was not feasible or did not have any comments. What is important to note here is the proportion that did not want a separate party and thought that it would not benefit Muslims was small.

There are similarities in the way a new leadership emerged among Sri Lankan Tamils and Muslims. In both ethnic groups the aggravation of the ethnic conflict resulted in the emergence of a leadership based in regions where there was a concentration of these ethnic groups. In other words it was a shift away from a leadership based in areas closer to the Centre. The latter, because of their own interests, could go into accommodative politics with majority parties. However with the aggravation of ethnic contradictions this arrangement no longer worked. The emergence of regional ethnic parties also meant radicalisation of demands as well. In the case of Sri Lankan Tamils this shift in the leadership is now total. With Muslims it has meant an introduction of a new element into Muslim politics in the form of the Muslim Congress.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress made its debut in electoral politics during the Provincial Council elections. In the Central Province they managed to get two members elected from the Kandy district and one member from the Matale district. Two other Muslim members had been elected through the UNP ticket in the Kandy district.

Table 16 summarises the electoral statistics regarding the performance of SLMC during the general elections.

Table 16**Performance of SLMC**

Contested in	% Moors (1981)	% Valid votes	Members
Colombo	8.3	4.0	
Kalutara	7.5	4.0	
Mahanuwara	9.9	4.4	
N'Eliya	2.8	1.0	
Galle	8.2	1.1	
Hambantota	1.1	0.3	
Jaffna	1.7	3.5	
Vanni		18.4	1
Batticaloa	23.9	23.7	1
Digamadulla	41.5	28.7	1
Trincomalee	29.0	17.6	
Puttalam	9.7	2.8	
Moneragala	1.9	0.5	
National list			1

As shown above the SLMC put forward candidates in 13 electoral districts out of 22. Although there is a significant concentration of Muslims in the Matale district the SLMC did not put forward any candidates there. By contesting in these 13 electoral districts the SLMC obtained a total of 202,877 (3.61% of total valid votes) votes in the country. Approximately this is about one third of Muslim votes in the country. Voting patterns in general shows that the strength of SLMC is mainly in Mannar district of the Northern Province (5.8% of the Provincial vote) and in the Eastern Province (24.7% of the Provincial vote).

Part IV - Ethnic conflict, political violence and Provincial Councils

The establishment of Provincial Councils enjoying a degree of devolved power is certainly a significant development in the political evolution of Sri Lanka. It creates legislative bodies at Provincial level capable of addressing issues in the Provinces.

As we have already discussed the Provincial Council of the Central Province will actually have within it three identifiable ethno-social groups. These are Indian Tamils working largely in the estate sector; Sinhalese a large section of whom is from peasant background; and Muslims found both in villages and cities. These ethno-social groups exist in a context of emerging politicised forms of minority ethnic identities and in an atmosphere of large scale violence associated with politics.

In such a context Provincial Council has to be viewed as an arena or an institution mediating between these contradictory processes. Therefore any study of Provincial Councils has to focus on their capacity to mediate these conflicts or to act as a conflict management institution. Looking at Provincial Councils as a conflict management institution is quite different from the way such institutions had been analysed in the administrative approaches. For the latter these are 'independent' structures that were put in place to achieve certain objectives. When these objectives are not achieved very often the failure is blamed on

certain 'factors'. In the conflict management approach they are not in any way independent institutions that arise in the mind of the planners or politicians, but they are products of a conflict process in society. Then they continue to exist in a context that is characterised by the social processes which are conflictual. In such an approach their effectiveness is measured by their capacity to mediate in the conflict and manage it.

In analysing the role of Provincial Councils with the above perspective one can note two dimensions - political and socio- economic. In the case of the first the question is whether the Provincial Councils will succeed as an arena for managing the conflicts at a political level. The second issue is related to the capacity of Provincial Councils to intervene in the socio- economic sphere so as to mitigate the contradictions emerging in this sphere.

Provincial Councils introduce a new forum for the manifestation of political interests that can be expressed through the electoral process. Provincial Councils could also be a useful mechanism for incorporating newly emerging social groups into the political sphere. This could be already happening through different political parties to a certain extent. Therefore theoretically it could be used to bring out political interests at the provincial level. However its specific management capabilities will depend on the type of political issues that will dominate in the area.

At the political level Provincial Councils can also become an arena for political management giving room for coalition politics between political parties representing different ethnic groups. For example at present the Provincial Council of the Central Province is not only an arena for the expression of the political will of the plantation people but it has also become a forum for coalition politics between the UNP and the CWC. This coalition arrangement between these two parties has played an important role in managing the ethnic relations with respect to the Indian Tamil community. There are certainly tensions in this arrangement, but it has worked for some time and the politics of the Central Province Provincial councils will become a crucial arena for this management politics.

Provincial Councils also provides a new arena for the expression of various political interests. Hitherto political interests were primarily expressed through the central legislature. Provincial Councils introduces a new platform for politics. This of course poses a host of interesting questions. How will the existing political forces make use of Provincial Councils?, Will Provincial Councils motivate new forms of political expressions?, etc..

Answers that could be given to these questions at present is largely of a speculative nature. However certain tendencies have some degree probability. As we have already mentioned one of them is expression of regional political interests through Provincial Councils. Kandyan Sinhalese political interests as well as Indian Tamil political interests are prime candidates for this. Central Province is the only area in the country where these specific political identities could be expressed. Therefore it is quite possible that Provincial Council of Central Province will be a platform for these identities. The political interaction between the Centre and the Provincial Council of the Central Province can get dominated by this contradiction. Such contradictions will form the second set of issues for political management that arises with the establishment of Provincial Councils.

Although we can keep some degree of hope on the Provincial Councils as a mechanism of conflict management in the political arena it is extremely difficult to expect such a capability in the socio-economic sphere. The capacity of the Provincial Council to intervene in the socio-economic sphere will depend very much on the extent to which the Council has a control over the development policies and can influence the development model. At present this seems to be very difficult due to main two main reasons. On one hand the degree of devolution envisaged in the proposed system for Sri Lanka is such that the Provincial Councils will not be controlling much of the development programmes in the Province.

Secondly the general tendency of the development model followed is towards central control.

The socio-economic problems of the major ethno-social groups in the Central Province are a part and parcel of general socio-economic problems faced by the entire society. It is unlikely that the Provincial Council system can make much of dent in the highly centralised economy of Sri Lanka so as to have a capacity to tackle problems at the socio-economic level.

The situation in the Central Province is also complicated by the particular socio-economic setting in this area which links the major ethnic groups that constitute the Province to distinct socio-economic systems. From the ethno-social groups the bulk of the Indian Tamils of the Province are attached to production system that is controlled from the Centre. Being a resident labour force, the problems regarding their living conditions are also linked to the estate and therefore comes under the purview of the Central government. On the other hand there are many problems of the Sinhala peasantry that will come under the power given to the Provincial Councils. In other words these ethno-social groups who are already divided historically due to many factors will now come under two different political authorities.

The estate based living conditions of the Indian Tamil labour makes it difficult for the Provincial Council to intervene in their socio-economic problems. On the other hand the PC of the Central Province has become important for the expression of the political power of the Indian Tamil population who are gaining citizenship rights and the voting rights. Today it is in this body that one finds the biggest concentration of representatives of the Indian Tamil people and it is a useful mechanism for the expression of their political will. That means as far as the Indian Tamil population is concerned the legislative body where they have some degree of political power will find it difficult to influence the socio-economic conditions of its constituency. Provincial Council of the Central Province will have to resolve this contradiction in future.

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POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND PROBLEMS OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN PROVINCIAL COUNCILS

A case study of Central Province

Introduction

This is the second part of the a two part report devoted to a study of the problems faced by the newly established Provincial Council in the area of education. This report consist of six sections. The first section looks at politics of education focusing on the crucial role played by education as a means of social mobility. This is followed by a survey of main developments in education since 1977 and a look at the educational problems of the Central Province of Sri Lanka. The fourth section traces the establishment and changes brought by the Provincial councils within this context. The final section summarises the conclusions from the study and ends up with some policy recommendations in the light of the conclusions.

Politics of Education and Social Mobility

The first Part of this study was based on the centrality of politics in the study of policy issues facing the newly established Provincial Councils(PCs). On the basis of a study of ethno-political processes, this part emphasised the need to keep politics in focus when studying policy issues faced by PCs. The study advocated this in contrast to a pure administrative approach in the analysis of policy problems facing PCs.

Keeping with this perspective we shall now proceed to look at the policy problems faced by the Provincial Council of Central Province in the area of education. In order to do this we will have to discuss briefly the political dimensions of education in Sri Lanka and the relevance of politics of education in the ongoing conflict faced by the Sri Lanka which has both a social and an ethnic dimension.

Education has always been a very sensitive political issue. It is able to mobilise people and any changes in the educational policies generate widespread discussion. This political sensitivity of education has a social dimension as well as an ethnic dimension. The principle reason behind this political sensitivity towards education is the crucial role played by education in our society as a means of social mobility. Education has been an avenue that has opened up opportunities for a wider section of the population. Due to some of the policy changes in education in the past it has actually opened up opportunities to a wider section of the population. Therefore there are high expectations from the investment made in education.

An understanding of this crucial role of education as a means of social mobility is extremely important in order to comprehend the enthusiasm and mobilisation that the questions related to education and educational reforms can have in Sri Lanka. Probably in this country there are very few other spheres of activity which can create an island-wide discussion and public interest like education. This was demonstrated even in recent times, for example when the White Paper on Education was introduced into public discussion in 1981.

Such a role has been entrusted to education partly because of the particular pattern of Sri Lanka's development pattern. The development process introduced from the colonial period did not give opportunities to many people in the sectors of the economy that were given priority. The plantation agriculture was based mainly on migrant labour and did not open

avenues for many. There was hardly any industrial development to talk of. On the other hand the agriculture, specially that of the wet zone, with land holdings that got divided into smaller and smaller plots from generation to generation did not hold out much hope. And it was in this region that a large section of the population continued to live. Even the 'Green Revolution' strategies introduced on a wide scale in the mid-sixties, did not bring about significant changes as far as the wet zone agriculture is concerned. This lack of development of productive forces in many sectors of the economy moved the population more and more towards education, qualifications and examination success and then in most cases towards employment in the state sector, as the principle hope for social mobility. This happened both in the Northern and Southern parts of the country. Districts of Jaffna and Matara are two examples of areas where small holder agriculture did not hold out much hope and education was seen as a major avenue for social mobility. These are also districts that show large out-migration rates because of people looking for avenues of livelihood outside agriculture in their traditional places of residence. Thus this process affected Tamils in the North as well as the Sinhalese in the south.

Thus the role of education as a principle means of social mobility has a reason in the structural characteristics of our socio-economic system.. Therefore the demands for expansion of education has an objective socio-economic base and the persistence of this condition is a strong reason people are sensitive about changes in educational policies.

The objective socio-economic situation and the role given by it to education creates conditions for a very widespread popular appeal for demands such as expansion of opportunities in education. It finds a ready response in large section of the population, who have no other means for social mobility. Very often this drive towards educational opportunities which is first of all a result of objective socio-economic condition in which people live, can acquire characteristics of a strong ideology where sending your children to schools and attempting to give them an education while undergoing all kinds of difficulties on the part of parents, gets internalised strongly into a value system. It is our premise that this ideology is fairly widespread in Sri Lanka and education is an issue where mobilisation of public opinion is possible.

Even at the end of eighties Education plays this role in our society and the demand for it is very high. However as we shall show later the capacity of education to fulfil these social demands is limited. In certain branches of education like the tertiary education this limitation is felt much more.

The incapacity of the education system to deliver educational demands is felt much more acutely among those social classes for whom education has been the key variable in their chances for social mobility and making a difference in their life chances from generation to generation. Among these classes education has actually fulfilled these aspirations in the past. These are also social classes who do have the capacity to benefit from expanding education. They do have in their command resources and influence which allow them to see their children through the educational ladder.

The influence of these classes have been the major social force shaping the education system in the past as well. Therefore an analysis of the social impact of education become more meaningful if this differential impact of education in society is kept in mind. In keeping with this perspective we could divide the population into the following three groups in terms of the opportunities for social mobility provided through education:-

(a) Those who have means of social mobility (inherited wealth, private capital, etc..) other than education: this group would have access to education, but educational achievement would not be a deciding factor in their social mobility.

(b) Those for whom education and opportunities provided through is the crucial factor for social mobility. While they lack other avenues for mobility, their background provides a certain material base due to which they can get the best use of the opportunities provided by education. For this group education is the main factor that changes their life situation from generation to generation.

(c) Those who participate in education, without it affecting their chances for social mobility in any significant way. They form the large majority of the population.

It is our premise that in order to understand the socio-political forces that have shaped our educational system and the contradictions that prevails in society because of changes in educational policy, it is important to understand group (b) who are the 'new' beneficiaries from the expansion of the system under state patronage. They become 'new' beneficiaries due to expansion of education and it will provide them with additional opportunities to climb the social ladder and aspire to higher social levels. Those in group (b) already enjoy a certain socio- economic base because of which they can participate in the educational opportunities provided by the state and therefore benefit from it. They do have a certain standard of living which makes it possible for them to send their children through twelve years of schooling and push them to higher education.

Many difficulties arise in exact characterisation of this group. The terms that are usually applied to identify them are 'intermediate classes' or 'petty bourgeoisie'. Sometimes both these terms are qualified with the term 'rural'.

These sections also demand an expanded role of state in education. Being a middle layer and very often rural based they do not have independent means for establishing or maintaining schools on their own. Therefore they look towards the state as a means of providing resources for education as well as opening doors of privileged sectors in the education system.

These 'intermediate classes' who benefit from the expansion of education are also a powerful political force. Many studies on political sociology has shown that people who are absolutely poor do not articulate themselves politically on their own. They are too involved with their day to day survival. It is those who are just above them ('intermediate classes') that usually become politically more active against injustices in society. They have a higher sensitivity regarding their own status and power in society vis a vis those in the upper classes. They are able to articulate their grievances politically and also have in their command enough intellectual and material resources to do so.

In Sri Lanka too these 'intermediate' classes have been extremely active in politics and has been in forefront of social change specially since mid fifties. Politically this group is very articulate and actually forms a part of the class block that rules this country. In addition nationalism and chauvinism has also been one of the potent political weapons of this class. Today it is a very useful slogan for these classes.

Much of the contradictions generated by lack of opportunities in education or inability of the society to provide chances for social mobility even if they get an education is felt by these 'intermediate classes'. These contradictions form a basis of the acute social conflict that Sri Lanka is facing today.

The 1971 insurgency was the first serious attempt in post independent Sri Lanka at capture

of state power through a violent insurrection. It was popularly termed as a 'youth insurrection'. In the analysis of underlying factors of this political event education and unemployment of the educated was given a high degree of importance. "The argument offered here was that a dramatic enlargement of educational opportunities, concentrated primarily within a single generation, produced soaring aspirations and expectations among the youth. The pace of the educational expansion, coupled with sluggish economic growth, led to staggering levels of unemployment for educated youths and an abrupt shattering of the new expectations. It may be inferred that the stifling of hopes and expectations contributed to a growth of disillusionment, alienation and sense of deprivation among youths, which in turn heightened the potential for political violence." (1).

Although the growth of education, emergence of an educated youth without a prospect for employment was not considered as the only 'cause' of the insurgency, it was accorded a key position in the explanations of that event. This was also reflected in some of the measures undertaken by the government as a policy response to the 1971 insurrection.

The political and social crisis faced by Sri Lanka today is much more complex than the insurgency of 1971. There are several conflict processes that prevails within the society. The character and impact of the present conflict is much more extensive and violent. It could threaten the very existence of Sri Lanka as a unitary state. There is the complex issue of ethnic conflict which cannot be reduced to pure economic terms as a major underlying reason for the present situation. This central issue was complicated because of a very high degree of violence in the political process, militarisation of the society and the involvement of a regional power. In short today's conflict is not simply a result of actions of 'frustrated educated youth', whose social mobility and economic advancement has been hindered.

However this does not mean that the 'old' issues are not operative in the present context. The demand for education is still high because it is looked upon as a means of social mobility. The problem of educated unemployed is also a major issues in today's context as well. Similarly there are many difficulties because of the incapacity of the state to fulfil the educational demands arising from the society. These are felt much more by the 'intermediate classes'. We shall look into some of these aspects in detail when we consider the post'77 development in education in Sri Lanka.

In the present context the social problems generated by the incapacity of education to act as a means of social mobility is complicated by the introduction of the ethnic factor. As we have already mentioned the ethnic conflict is an extremely complicated issue having several dimensions. However education has always been a major issue linked to it. The facilities provided for education for different ethnic groups; the medium of instruction in education; and the opportunities for higher education enjoyed by different ethnic groups have all been controversial issues in the ethnic conflict.

The issue of admission to the universities became a major controversial issue in the ethnic conflict in the seventies. This was sparked off by the notorious formulae for standardisation of marks which were introduced for university entrance. The initial outcome of these new admissions formulae was to limit the opportunities for Tamil medium students in faculties such as medicine, engineering and science which were in much demand (2). These were the avenues for social mobility in higher education and the attempts to manipulate opportunities in these streams on an ethnic basis created much controversy. This certainly played a crucial role in the growth of Tamil militancy in the seventies.

Thus discussions on the impact of education in social mobility has two dimensions. On one hand we have the three different social groups identified above. Out thesis is the impact will differ among these three social groups. Secondly it is also necessary to analyse how this differential social impact operates in different ethnic formations. Both these aspects together will give us an idea of the influence of education as a means of social mobility. This is

crucial research question that has to be tackled in the future in the area of sociology of education.

Developments in Education since 1977

The coming into power of UNP regime in July 1977 initiated an economic policy framework that resulted in the greater integration of the country's economy with the international capitalist system. This integration of Sri Lanka's economy into an international system has been taking place in most sectors of our economy. Today the influence of the international system is relevant to understand the production process even in a remote village. In other words the dynamics of the development process is increasingly determined by processes that operate internationally. This determination comes not only because of greater intervention of bodies like IMF and World Bank in Sri Lanka's economic decisions, but also because international capitalism is an objective historical force that operates internationally and can be analysed only as an international system. What we are observing in this second half of the twentieth century is the greater and greater influence of this international system in economies and societies not only of the third world countries, but also in the so called second world countries.

These policies introduced since 1977 are promoted by what have come to be known as monetarist theories in economic development and they have been strongly supported by international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Because of this some authors have referred to these policies as "Monetarist/IMF/WB (MIW) type" (3). MIW-type policies can be summarised as economic liberalisation, export-led growth and fiscal balance.

"Great faith is placed on the market mechanism as a panacea for economic ailments, and government intervention in the economy is opposed in almost any form" (4). These policies have two aspects, viz: structural adjustment and liberalisation. Structural policies recommended are liberalisation of trade and financial dealings with the international system, development of the financial institutions and money markets and reducing the size and the economic role of the state. On the stabilisation side recommendations are for the balancing of the budgets and maintaining a stable growth in money supply. (5) These recommendations are based on well known tenets of free market theories that emphasise market forces, comparative advantages, reliance on private capital (local or foreign), balanced budgets (cutting down of the government expenditure and welfare) and control of money supply. These changes in the direction of economic policy since 1977 are what characterise the main thrust in the development policy since then.

In contrast to post '77 policies, the previous phase can be characterised as a period when state regulated inward looking policies dominated. The policy prescription that emerged looked towards the state as the main engine of economic growth. Protected markets, price controls, restrictions on foreign exchange movements and quotas in production were the hallmarks of this period. All these amounted on the one hand to a greater dependence on state regulation and state involvement for economic development and greater protection of the economy from external factors.

What is also important to note is the fact that state involvement was also legitimised with a social justice argument. Intervention of the state in various spheres of the economy and society was to redress the injustice prevailing in society and some even characterised this transfer to state ownership within a capitalist framework as 'socialism'. State subsidies were

introduced into the social sector as well. This led to the development of the welfare policies that Sri Lanka is famous for. Despite this 'welfarist' orientation this pre-'77 phase can be more correctly understood as a different phase of capitalism with a different set of policy orientations.

Even before this 'new' post '77 phase of capitalist development was introduced into Sri Lanka the difficulties in fulfilling the aspirations of the population in relation to education started to show. Two most important manifestation of this were (a) Increasing difficulties in maintaining resource allocation so as to continue the expanding role of state in education. (b) The presence of a dislocation between the increase in the number of those graduating from the system and the availability of jobs. While the first was questioning whether the state could continue to distribute educational facilities in the same way as before, the emergence of educated unemployed meant that the aspiration for mobility of those who succeeded and went through the system was not fulfilled. The popular demands for educational opportunities, democratisation of the educational structures and nationalist objectives within education were the forces shaping educational development in the past. But it was clear that from the seventies this was becoming more and more difficult within the present economic framework. The policy changes of post '77 period were initiated within this context.

- Policy thrust in Education

The thrusts in the educational policies since 1977 can be identified by the analysis of principle policy documents that emerged during this period. Of these documents the White Paper on Education and the Corporate Plan for the development of Higher Education are two important ones. Public Investment Plans presented every year covering investment patterns for the coming five years are the other sources of information, specially on the investment patterns in education.

White Paper on Education (6) was a result of the deliberations of the Education Reforms Commission set up in 1981. The findings of the Commission was presented as a White Paper for the purpose of public discussion. Although these discussions were inconclusive because of the controversies it generated, and the public had the impression that it was withdrawn and no special legislation on education was brought in, the thinking in the White Paper was the main guideline for educational policies in general education during this period.

There is no doubt that the rising costs of education was a major concern of the White Paper on Education. The major strategy proposed for facing this problem in general education was linked to a regrouping of schools into so called 'clusters'. As the White Paper says, "In general, schools within a defined geographic area will be grouped into a cluster for the purpose of better organisation, management and development. This will enable a more efficient utilisation of resources of both the state and the community. Thus the smallest unit for planning the development and organisation of the school system will henceforth be the school cluster"(7). Generally a cluster was expected to have about 3000 - 5000 students.

Along with the 'breaking - up' of the centralised system into smaller units for administrative purposes, for organisation and for development, one notes in the White Paper the encouragement given to these units to be self reliant. Thus, "school clusters will be encouraged to move towards greater self-reliance so that they may shoulder heavier responsibilities and also be vested with greater authority with regard to the management of the cluster's activities."(8) A similar idea of self-reliance was earlier put forward by the

establishment of what was called the 'school development societies' at each school level. Now it is the school cluster unit that is expected to be self-reliant. It is important to look at the trend towards the break-down of the school system into small units and the demand for their self-reliance, together. It is by this two-pronged strategy that the White Paper was trying to face the question of the scarcity of resources available for education.

The White Paper extended the idea of breaking the highly centralised educational structures in the area of educational administration as well. It proposed setting up District Educational Development Committee in each administrative district which were to handle decentralised administration. Very often these decentralisation attempts are also means of reducing the resource burden on the central budget by giving part of the responsibility for resources to the decentralised structures.

The second strategy of meeting the rising costs in education was linked to the establishment of several terminal points in the general educational structure. Looking at education as a ladder with twelve consecutive years in school leading into university has been the dominant ideology in education. This is closely linked to the role played by education as a means of social mobility. In reality, however, many do not complete this route. A large number drop out of the system half-way. Nevertheless, the expectations built on the education system in this manner are very strong. This not only exert tremendous pressures for the state to continue to expand education, but is also costly because many drop out of the system without achieving the intended goals. This has been identified as a major problem when it comes to making education more cost effective and therefore it is linked to the overall question of the rising costs of education.

A possible remedy for this is to allow students to stream out of the system at earlier stages and legitimise, , their departure from school with certificates or grades. Secondly there could be attempts to develop other branches of education so as to absorb some of the students. Some of the proposals in the White Paper reflect such thinking.

The structure of the education proposed by the White Paper provided several new stages for streaming out of students from the course of general education. According to the White Paper proposals, "at Grade 8 a local examination will be held to enable those who wish to leave school to obtain certificate. General education will terminate with the G.C.E. Examination at the end of Grade 11. The last 2 grades in the school system will be accessible only to those with a strong academic aptitude and will prepare students for a University Entrance Examination which will replace the present G.C.E. (AL) Examination." (9) Thus the idea of limiting the numbers attempting to go into higher education was a core idea in the White Paper proposals.

Finally White paper puts great emphasis on the development of middle level education. White Paper incorporated special report on the development of middle level technical education. It proposed for the first time state co-ordination of this sector of education under a Tertiary Education Commission. The main objective of this Commission was to develop professional courses at various levels, with emphasis being given to Science Technology and Commerce.

The White Paper also gave a clear positive encouragement to private initiatives in education. This was in keeping with the general policies of the government encouraging the participation of the private sector. A private sector in education persisted even in the period before 1977 when the expansion of the state in education was the norm. However since 1977 there is positive encouragement given to the private sector. This change of attitude towards the participation of the private sector in education is a fundamental change in thinking from the pre '77 era. The establishment of the much talked-about private Medical College and the legislation enacted to give the private institutions the right to grant degrees are examples of this encouragement. The government also reinstated a practice that was discontinued with the take-over of 'assisted' schools in 1962 - that is, the decision to take back into state hands the payment of salaries of teachers in private schools.

Without a serious dismantling of the state education system, the government can, nevertheless attempt to ease its financial burden by passing on at least a certain part of the responsibility for the educational system on to the private sector. This would not have increased the financial burden on the state, but would be an indicator of the government's positive attitude to the private sector in other areas.

In the area of Higher Education the policy reforms began with the reorganisation of the University structure. Since 1977 the single university system that existed before was converted into a system of six autonomous universities. A University Grants Commission was established to determine the higher educational policies. The Corporate Plan drawn up by the University Grants Commission is a major document that reflects the policy emphasis for the post '77 period.

The Corporate Plan concentrated on "the consolidation and development of existing universities and faculties. The number of new proposals have been minimised and have been concentrated in the areas of science, medicine, technology and computer science'.(10) In the admission policies its main concern has been to balance the social demands for Arts education and manpower needs of the country. It has tried to do this by a "modest increase in total entry, while decreasing the arts and increasing the science intake"(11)

- Patterns of expenditure in education

The Table 1 given below summarises some of the main indicators on expenditure on General education.

Table 1

(in Rs. mln.)	Total Current Exp. (A)	Exp. per Pupil (B)	A as a % of GNP	Total exp. as a % of govt. exp.
1977	860.4	349	2.5	10.1
1978	962.9	322	2.4	5.8
1979	1098.6	350	2.2	5.8
1980	1398.3	426	2.3	5.3
1981	1621.0	481	2.0	6.4
1982	2035.1	599	2.2	6.2
1983	2360.9	682	2.1	6.6
1984	2529.0	715	1.8	5.3
1985	3270.5	898	2.2	6.1
1986	2493.5	665	1.5	5.1
1987	3414.9	891	2.0	6.0

Source : Central Bank - Social & Economic Statistics

Declining trends in the proportion of GNP spent on education started before 1977. By the beginning of the seventies Sri Lanka's expenditure on education has come down from the 5% GNP figure which had been highlighted very often. Between 1973 and 1974, there was a further drop of the expenditure from 3.4% of the GDP to 2.7%. Post 1977 saw further decrease in this indicator. In the years 1978 to 1987 the expenditure on General Education 1.5% to 2.4% G.N.P.

The seventies also show a drop in the educational expenditure as a percentage of the total government expenditure. Educational expenditure which had been running constantly at

around 13 - 15% of total public expenditure up to 1972 declined to 10% by 1977. From 1978 onwards there is a further decline. In the years 1978 to 1987 this fluctuates between 5.1% and 6.6%. Therefore both these indicators show that the high level of educational expenditure that Sri Lanka was reputed for has come to end by the beginning of the seventies.

Table 2

Per capita Expenditure on Education (At Constant prices)

(in Rs.)	Education	Higher Education
1970		
Recurrent	34.65	4.88
Capital	1.86	1.02
Total	36.51	5.9
1977		
Recurrent	62.94	150.58
Capital	7.20	17.50
Total	70.14	168.08
1983		
Recurrent	150.58	11.13
Capital	17.50	16.00
Total	168.08	27.13

Source : Sri Lanka: the social impact of Economic policies during the last decade - UNICEF - Colombo - 1985

Table 2 summarises the per capita expenditure in real terms both in General and Higher Education for 1977 to 1983 period. This data shows that in the case of general education per capita real expenditure declined slightly during this period. This has happened both for capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure. The main reason for this were the decisions taken to reverse some of the changes brought about by the 1972 educational reforms. The lowering of the age of admission from 6 to 5 years increased the school population. This added "....approximately 300,000 children to the school system. This together with the restoration of the 10th year of the basic educational cycle and the G.C.E. Ordinary level and Advanced level examinations, increased total school enrolment by 27 per cent during 1978 and 1979". (12) As a result of these changes "per student real expenditure fell from Rs.336 in 1977 to Rs.273 in 1980 and Rs.260 in 1983. The percentage of the total recurrent expenditure going to teacher salaries also went up during this period from 90% in 1977 to 95% in 1980 and 91% in 1983..".(13)

"Much of the increase in expenditure on education since 1977 has been in the area of university education with recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure going up ten times during 1977 - 82. The real expenditure per student on formal tertiary education increased at the rate of 48 percent p.a. during this period in contrast to the decline of 16 per cent p.a. during 1972 - 77."(14) This increase in expenditure was largely due to increase in capital expenditure. "In 1979 recurrent expenditure on university education was 62 per cent of the total expenditure. However in subsequent years capital expenditure increased to 59 per cent of total expenditure in 1981 and 57 per cent in 1982 with the inauguration of work on the new campuses at Ruhunu, Dumbura and Batticaloa and with major improvements being

effected in the infrastructure of university education in the country".(15)

In Higher Education increased expenditure improved the real per capital expenditure by 24% between 1977 and 1983. (Table 2) It also meant that Higher Education began to improve its share of the total education budget. "Higher education increased its share of the budget from 7% in 1977 to 16% in 1983". (16) Data for later years shows a further increase in the share Higher Education expenditure to about 23%.

Despite these initial increases in expenditure in certain branches of education still a very large percentage of resources goes to keep the school system going, leaving very little for new additions. In 1986 for example "approximately 80% of total expenditure in education was spent on recurrent expenditure and the balance 20% was allocated to the capital expenditure."(17) This was similar to the proportions in 1985.

Available data also shows the regional disparities in educational expenditure despite the slight increases in expenditure during the early period. Table 3 below shows a grouping of the educational districts on the basis of Recurrent expenditure per pupil in 1985. The average figure for Sri Lanka during this year was Rs.1042.6. It varied from a low of Rs.625.0 for Vavuniya educational district to a high of Rs.1206.9 in Colombo.

Educational districts by recurrent expenditure per pupil (1985)

Rs.600 - 800	Nuwara Eliya, Tangalle, Jaffna/Killinochchi/Mullativu, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Trincomalee, Moneragala
Rs.800 - 1000	Homagama, Matale, Galle, Nikaweratiya, Chilaw, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Bandarawela, Ratnapura, Ampara
Rs.1000 - 1200	Gampaha, Minuwangoda, Kalutara, Kandy, Matara, Kurunegala, Kuliyaipitiya, Kegalle
> Rs.1200	Colombo

Source: Compiled from " Some Indicators and Projections Relevant to First and Second Level General Education" - Ministry of Education - December 1986

Most of the available data shows that post 1977 period has not meant any significant dismantling of the education structure managed by the state. This is the impression given by some of the critiques of the post '77 period when they talk of the 'destruction of the free education system'. On the other hand because of the favourable foreign aid situation that existed after 1977, the government has been able to carry out new investment programmes in order to improve infrastructure facilities of the school system.

However the declining proportion of the government budget that education receives continued after 1977. At the same time the increased expenditure in education which we have noted does not mean that the education system has been able to meet all the demands on education. Many problem areas remain. We shall look at some of the crucial problems in the sections that follow.

- Diversification of Education

The period of the expansion of education in the sixties was buttressed by a strong ideology which saw education as a ladder leading to a university degree. This populist ideology wanted to see an education that will take the rural 'boy' to the university which will probably take him to a government job. Most of the expansion during this period took place in the area of liberal arts and humanities. Part of the reason for this was of course lack of facilities for any other education at the post secondary level, specially in rural areas. The other reason the desire for a 'degree' as major means of social mobility.

However the pressures of the economic system which has been making itself felt gradually from the seventies, is moving the system away from this populist model to one where the needs of the economy are taken into account. This means the system has to be reformed qualitatively in order to produce skills of a technical nature both at the middle and higher levels.

Even at times when our economy was not expanding, there were difficulties in filling vacancies at the middle-level professional and craftsmen grades. With a certain expansion of the economy since 1977 in areas like construction, tourism, services and with such developments like opening up of employment avenues in the Middle East, the incentives for development of skills at middle level have grown. At the same time, there is a demand for this type of education coming from the students as well. Private sector also has been encouraged to play a role in this area.

In actual fact the need to improve middle level technical education was something that was recognised long before '77. The Gnanalingam report which formed a part of the White Paper is a repetition of what was said by a similar commission headed by the same person in the sixties. But the objective conditions related to the economy which is necessary to fulfil these needs had arisen only after the more systematic implementation of capitalist policies since '77.

Since 1977, a certain expansion of this middle-level education has taken place; in order to get an overall picture, one has to add to the efforts of the government, those from the private sector, which has moved into areas such as commerce and management. What is interesting to speculate on is the feed-back that these will developments have on the attitudes towards education in general. The attitudes associated with the initial expansion of education, which were characterised by the yearning for a University degree, may be changing significantly. This is not only because of the difficulties encountered in obtaining employment, but also due to the new emphasis on technical education.

The expansion of the middle level education since 1977 is summarised in Table 4

Table 4

Year	Intake (part time and full time)
1977	5755
1978	8963
1979	9535
1980	9458
1981	12195
1982	12778
1983	15724
1984	15032
1985	14429
1986	15001
1987	11539*

* excluding Jaffna, Kandy, Pathadumbara and Nuwara Eliya training collages

Table 5

Courses	1977	%	1986	%
Higher National Diploma & Professional courses	1963	20	3345	15.5
Diploma courses	1736	17.7	1040	4.8
Certificate Courses	4121	41.9	10152	47.1
Trade Courses	2010	20.4	1847	8.6
Other			5178	24.0
Total	9830		21562	

As shown by above data the intake of students into this sector in 1977 was 5755. This has increased to an average of 9300 in the years 1978 to 1980 and between 14100 in the years 1981 to 1986. Table 5 also shows that there has been a diversification of the type of courses available.

The expansion of the middle level education in the public sector took place through several bodies. These include Technical Institutes under the Ministry of Higher education, National Apprenticeship Board, Vocational Training Centres under Labour Ministry, and National Youth Services Council. These are the main state managed organisations where this education takes place and most of them expanded their programmes in various ways during the post '77 period. Most of these programmes were expanded with the help of foreign aid and this has been a major factor for this expansion.

The development of a private sector in education since 1977 has been most prominent in this middle level of education dealing with various types of vocational and skills development. In Sri Lanka there has always been a private sector in this area of education. What we have seen since 1977 is a vigorous growth of this sector. Although the debate on privatisation in education in Sri Lanka during the past decade has centred on the Private Medical College, due to the high visibility of this issue and the political clout of those affected by it, the real growth of the private sector has been in this middle level of education.

"Private initiatives account for 11 per cent of the intake for formal training but contribute much more significantly with places in industry for the apprenticeship programme and by way of short course. The intake into formal technical and vocational programmes increased by 85% in the public sector and four times in the private sector in the post 1977 period...".(18)

The expansion of the middle level education is an attempt to shift away from dominance of liberal arts education at the tertiary level as the motivating force in education. The argument has been to develop professional and technical skills that the economy needs. Similar thinking has influenced the policy emphasis given in higher education.

- Capacity and demand on the education system.

Sri Lanka has the reputation of being a country that has expanded her secondary level of education so as to include more and more children of school going age within the system. The available data shows that this has expanded in recent times as well. In other words more and more children who are of the school going age enter into the education system.

Table 6

Pupils as a percentage of relevant age group

1977	50.3
1978	59.4
1979	60.6
1980	62.9
1981	69.2
1982	68.3
1983	68.6
1984	69.2
1985	70.3
1986	71.1
1987	71.9

Source : Central Bank - Economic and Social statistics

Census data also shows that participation rates has shown remarkable improvements for different age groups. Participation of children of the 5 to 14 age group has improved significantly in recent times.

Table 7

Percentage attending School by Age group

Age Group	1971	1981
5 - 9	60.9	84.3
10 - 14	69.6	82.3
15 - 19	34.5	42.0

Source : Census Data 1971 & 1981

An indication of the same can be had by looking at the proportions who do not get into the schools. Here too there is a continuous improvement.

Table 8

School Avoidance Rates*

Age Group	1973	1978/79	1981/82
5 - 9	23.7	17.6	19.9
10-13	9.6	6.8	7.1
14-18	10.0	7.2	8.9

* For the age group 5 - 13 'schools avoidance' includes those who have never been to school as well as those who have been to school but are not currently attending. For older age groups, this category includes only those who have never been to school. The minimum age of entry into school in 1973 was 6 years and in 1978/79 and 1981/82 it was 5 years.

Source : Sri Lanka: the social impact of Economic policies during the last decade - UNICEF
- Colombo - 1985

The next important aspect is the fate of those enter into education system. Not all those who enter are able to complete the entire open span of education. The completion of the primary cycle of education can be considered as a minimum goal in improving the access to education. This has been identified as a basic need by international agencies as well. Table 9 below gives relevant data for Sri Lanka in relation to this indicator.

Table 9**Number completing the primary cycle per 1000 in year 1**

District	1971	1982
Ampara	490	681
Anuradhapura	484	750
Bandarawela	649	773
Batticaloa	375	503
Colombo	772	830
Galle	579	806
Gampaha	685	843
Jaffna	692	801
Kalutara	637	809
Kandy	544	762
Kegalla	614	774
Kurunegala	512	795
Mannar	479	694
Matale	468	745
Matara	638	815
Monaragala	447	764
Mullativu		847
Nuwara Eliya	514	457
Polonnaruwa	563	670
Puttalam	449	693
Ratnapura	493	707
Tangalla	524	765
Trincomalee	452	635
Vavuniya	512	678
Sri Lanka	576	742

Source : National Atlas - The National Atlas of Sri Lanka - Survey Department 1988 - P.72

The national average here shows an almost 30% increase during this period. All the districts show an improvement in this indicator, with a single exception. The exception is the Nuwara Eliya district, where the proportion completing the primary cycle has dropped from 1971 to 1982.

Some of the problems regarding the capacity of the education system to fulfil educational needs of the society can be understood by looking at data on the progress of a cohort that enters into grade 1. Comparing the data given below with the progress of cohort that entered grade one for example in 1969, we can see the progress of the capacity of the education system.

Table 10

Progress of a cohort	Age 5	in 1975	in 1969
	335000	100	100
Entrants to schools	303000	90.5%	80%
To govt. schools	290000		
To other schools	13000		
Not entering schools	32000	9.5%	20%
No from cohort in gr.6 (1980)	239000	71.3%	44%
No from cohort in gr.ix (1983)	189000	56.4%	
No from cohort in gr.x (1984)	168000	50.4%	
No qualifying to sit 'A' level	85000	25.4%	15%
No with minimum marks to enter university	28000	8.7%	
No admitted to universities	5000	1.5%	0.1%

Source: Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth - Sessional Paper No.1 - 1990

This comparative data shows that there is a continuous improvement at the level of secondary education. If in the 1969 cohort almost 20% did not enter into schools at all, this proportion has been halved by the time 1975 cohort enters into schools. Similarly the proportions completing the primary cycle improves from 44% to 71% for these two different cohorts. The percentages finishing ten years of schooling also improves from about 30% to 50%, so does proportions qualifying to sit for A levels.

The major incapacity of the education system still remains at the upper level. From the cohort in 1969 only about 0.1% had chances to enter into higher education. This has improved marginally to 1.5% by the time of the 1975 cohort.

Table 11

Year	Total qualified	Total admitted	%
1975	15023	3942	26.2
1976	19045	4150	21.8
1977	27580	4996	18.1
1978	26918	4959	18.4
1979	29698	4857	16.4
1980	41331	5004	12.1
1981	32409	5318	16.4
1986	24004	6208	25.9
1987	31079	6143	19.8
1988	34490	6463	18.7

"In the period 1977 - 1986 the total enrolment in universities increased by 18.7 per cent. However this increase has been concentrated in science-based disciplines, where intake has increased by 31 per cent and total enrolment by 30 per cent. In contrast for Arts based subjects, intake has increased only by 3.7 per cent'.(19) Compared to the enormous demand for higher education these increases were very marginal.

We can get a sense of the present situation in absolute numbers by looking at the figures given in the recently published Youth Commission Report(20). It has looked at 1987, which was a year with no disruption in the examination process in recent times. This year "484,797 students sat the 'O' Level examination but only 95,416 (about 20%) qualified to continue their studies. 389,381 students all around 16 years of age were compelled to look for other avenues for self advancement." This gives the magnitude of those entering the labour market with at least ten years of schooling.

"In the same year, 112577 students sat the "A" Level examination, of which only 31,079 qualified. Of these 6143 gained admission to the University.....Hence in 1987 alone 106,434 students who sat the 'A' Level turned away disappointed and frustrated at not been able to enter the University."...Thus in 1987, a total of 495,815 students - nearly half a million young people -(398,381 students at 'O' Level and 106,434 at 'A' Level) had to come to terms with unfulfilled aspirations." (21)

This lack of avenues of further education is not compensated at all by other available avenues. At the moment the Open University can take in a maximum of 9000 students and all the other government managed middle level institutes another 15000. Although there is a large number of other training programmes run by government managed institutions as well as by private organisations this does not meet the demand of the numbers finishing secondary level of education. This is a major issue that has undermined the role of education as a means of social mobility.

Educational Profile of CP

There is no doubt that Sri Lanka has achieved a considerable degree of success in providing educational facilities to a large section of her school going population. These achievements have been highlighted in many reports both here and abroad. However many problem areas remain. In the sixties and seventies most critical evaluations of education focused on the quantitative aspects of the availability of schooling facilities. The thrust was to expand the facilities as much as possible and to overcome disparities at various levels. Lately questions related to the quality of education both in terms of internal efficiency of the education system and problems of standards have entered the discussion. Therefore the present debate on problems areas of education include almost all aspects of the education system.

A recent survey (22) of the education system identified following areas of education as needing attention at the moment - "the non schooled children ; the early rejects of the school system; the physically and mentally handicapped; the quality, efficiency and relevance of primary education; the selection and screening mechanisms of the education system; the small category 3 schools with only 1-2 teachers; the 5-6 most disadvantaged districts in the country; the Estate sector; planning, management and co- ordination in education; linkage between education and world of work; needs and supply of manpower; and the role of research of educational policy." As already mentioned this list covers almost every aspect of education and is a good guide in identification issues in educational policy.

These problems faced by the education system in general is reflected at the Provincial level as well. This section will try to focus on the provincial level. Information for this profile of education is primarily based on the analysis of educational statistics published by the Education Department in 1981 and 1985. Other sources such as the data from the Consumer Finance Surveys of the Central Bank and data of the Labour Force and Socio-Economic surveys of the Department of Census and Statistics are used as supplementary sources of information.(23)

The available data allows us to present the profile taking into account two variables operative in the Province. One is the district variations in educational standards and secondly the characteristics of education provided for different ethnic groups in the Province. Sometimes the data for both these variables overlap, sometimes they do not.

First we look at the district level indicators for education in the Central Province. Available statistical indicators are considered under several issues which seem to reflect the main problem areas in education.

Table 12

Provision of educational facilities in Central Province

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	S.L.
No of schools per 30 sq.km.	> 9	3-5	7-9	
No of schools per 10,000 pop.	4-6	6-8	6-8	
State schools by type of school				
	%	%	%	
1A & B - A/L Science	35 (5.2)	9 (2.9)	9 (2.0)	430
1C - A/L Arts or Commerce	117 (17.3)	57 (16.0)	40 (8.7)	1292
2 - Up to Grade 10	269 (39.9)	110 (35.8)	119 (25.9)	3914
3 - Up to Grade 5	254 (37.6)	139 (45.3)	292 (63.5)	3998
Total	675	307	460	9634
% of one teacher schools	7.0	4.2	18.7	5.4
Pupil/Teacher ratio by type of school (1983)				
1 A & B	22.65	23.05	23.41	25.17
1C	22.91	22.60	25.58	24.58
2	24.78	22.70	27.63	27.23
3	27.44	26.67	52.13	31.72
Latrine facilities needed as a % of requirements	3.85	36.00	63.29	24.31

Generally all the indicators show that Kandy is the district with the best provision of educational facilities. Specially when it comes to schools that can give an education up to grade 12 Kandy is far ahead of other two districts. On the other hand Kandy has the lowest indicator in terms of schools per 10,000 population. This shows that due to higher population concentration in this district there is greater pressure on the schools.

Nuwara Eliya districts stands out as the worst off in terms of provision of facilities. Although this district seem to be provided with schools at a level comparable to the other two districts, the bulk of the schools in Nuwara Eliya provide an education only up to grade 5. Almost 64% of the schools in Nuwara Eliya district provide an education only up to that level. This is much higher than the national average of 41.5% for schools in this category. The pupil teacher ratio in these schools is 52.13, which is the lowest for the province. In addition 18.7% of schools in Nuwara Eliya are what are called one-teacher schools.(7.0% Kandy; 4.2% Matale; 5.4% for Sri Lanka).

Even in other facilities schools of this district are poorly provided. For example, in 1985 schools of this district did not have almost two third of the latrine facilities required for the schools. This low standard of educational facilities is due to the long term neglect of schools in the estate sector, which also means neglect of the education of Indian Tamils who live in estates. We shall come back to this issue later in this section.

The level of provision of educational facilities in the Matale district is quite comparable to that of Kandy with some exceptions. It seems to fall behind Kandy in facilities such as latrines, playgrounds, etc.. However the other indicators of Matale like No of schools per 30 sq.km..No of schools per 10,000 population and percentage of one teacher schools are quite comparable to those of Kandy.

Table 13

School enrolment and progress of cohorts in Central Province

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	S.L.
Age specific enrolment ratio (1983)				
5 - 14	84.9	85.1	68.6	85.0
14 - 19	39.0	33.2	20.1	33.4
No of pupils from a cohort of 1000 that would graduate from the primary cycle (1983)	750	783	662	800
Pupil years required to produce a single graduate completing the primary cycle (1983)	8.30	8.25	9.56	7.94
% of students at A.L.Science obtaining 200 or more marks (1981-1983)	6.17	4.12	1.05	6.65

These are indicators which shows to what extent children of school going age population in these areas actually go to school and their chances of getting through the school system. Indicators also cover the chances students have at higher levels of education such the senior secondary level.

Again these indicators show the lower standards of the Nuwara Eliya district. Its enrolment rate for the 5-14 is only 68.6%. This by the way is the lowest enrolment ratio for the whole island. Similarly only 662 of every 1000 children of Nuwara Eliya district complete the primary cycle and on an average it takes 9.56 pupil years to produce a single graduate from the primary cycle.

The other indicators for student performance are for higher levels of education like the Advance Level examination. At this level too the performance of Nuwara Eliya district is very low. Only 1.05% of students sitting A.L. in Science gets more than 200 marks, which is the bare minimum for a pass grade in four subjects at the A levels.

In the cases of Kandy and Matale the differences in these indicators are much more pronounced at the higher levels of education. At the lower levels of the educational cycle such as the enrolment ratio for the 5-14 age group, the number of students graduating from the primary cycle for every 1000 pupils and the number of pupil years required for a single primary school graduate, the indicators for Matale district are slightly better off than those for Kandy. But at the higher levels of schooling like the A.L. the disparity between these two districts come to light. In Kandy more students qualify for Advance level education than in Matale. This is true for all streams of learning such as science, arts or commerce and for all media of instruction. This fact is also borne out by comparison with national averages. At higher levels of secondary education the performance of Matale is much lower than the national average.

Expenditure in Education

Table 14

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	S.L.
Recurrent expenditure per pupil (Rs.)	1129.2	927.2	694.6	1042.6
% of recurrent exp. extended by community (1984)	3.5	1.7	1.8	2.9

In our education system the bulk of the expenditure in education falls to the category of recurrent expenditure. From this almost 80% is taken up by salary payments to teachers. Therefore disparities in recurrent expenditure largely reflect the different levels of expenditure for teachers.

There are glaring disparities in the indicators for recurrent expenditure per pupil in the three districts. At one end Kandy district has an expenditure of Rs.1129.20 per pupil and at the other end Nuwara Eliya has an expenditure of Rs. 694.60 per pupil - 38% lower than the expenditure level for Kandy. Like some of the other indicators Nuwara Eliya has the lowest figure for the entire island. Matale district shows a per pupil expenditure of Rs.927.20. It is important to note that expenditure levels in Matale and Nuwara Eliya are below the national average as well.

A very small percentage of this recurrent expenditure is borne by the support of the community. Kandy with the community providing 3.5% of the recurrent expenditure shows the highest levels of community contribution.

Educational Levels of the population

Table 15

Literacy rates (1981)	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	S.L.
Total	85.1	82.5	78.6	
Male	90.4	87.9	87.4	
Female	80.0	77.0	69.7	

Educational Levels (1981)	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	S.L.
Below Gr.5	25.6	30.3	33.6	
Passed grades 5,6,7	35.7	37.8	41.2	
Passed grades 8 or 9	27.7	24.3	18.4	
Passed O/L in 6 subjects	7.5	5.0	3.3	
Passed A/L in 3 subjects	1.5	0.9	0.5	
Passed degree or graduate	0.8	0.5	0.3	
Unspecified	1.1	1.3	2.7	

Educational Index (1981)	5.54	5.04	4.60	
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This data is from the national census. It measures the comparative educational standards achieved by the entire population of the district. Literacy rates, Educational levels and Educational Index are some of the indicators used for this measurement. As it can be expected Nuwara Eliya district is the worst off in all these indicators. Even in a very basic indicator like literacy rates the situation in the Nuwara Eliya district is severe. For example only 69.7% of females in the Nuwara Eliya district are literate. There is as much 33.6% of the district population who haven't attended schools at all and another 41.2% have passed grades 5,6, and 7. There is a significant drop from this point onwards and only 3.3% of the population have passed O/L in 6 subjects.

The difference between Kandy and Matale districts in these indicators come out at the higher levels of education, while at the lower levels the situation in the two districts are similar. While 7.5% and 1.5% of the Kandy district population have an educational level up to 'O' Level and 'A' Level respectively, the corresponding figures for Matale district are 5.0% and 0.9%.

The comparison of these district level data given above allows us to place the three districts in a continuum as far as the education situation is concerned. At one end is the Kandy district with relatively better school facilities. However in this district there can be great disparities and due to the larger demand for education there is greater pressure on the schools. In all other indicators either for provision of educational facilities or the educational levels of the population Kandy is the best district.

At the other end is the Nuwara Eliya district. It is the district with low educational levels and a low educational index. It has the lowest levels of recurrent expenditure per pupil. Its school system has a large proportion of schools giving an education only up to 5th grade. 18.7% of the schools in the district are one teacher schools. Only 662 of 100 students complete

the primary cycle. This district has lowest enrolment ratios in both age groups of 5 - 14 and 14 - 19. In schools having grades only up to year 5 this district has an appalling pupil/teacher ratio of 52.13.

Matale district can be placed in between Kandy and Nuwara Eliya in this continuum of educational situation. It is at the upper end of the educational ladder that the difference between Kandy and Matale becomes significant. Facilities available for Advance level education, performance of students at this level, etc in Matale are below national averages as well. At the same time these are points in the system which are crucial for social mobility.

Education and ethnicity in the Central Province

Sri Lanka over the years has actually developed a state owned school system which is ethnically segregated. In many multiethnic societies education is very often ethnically segregated. Historically the Sri Lankan education system was segregated according to religious denominations. However the take over of denominational schools in 1962 brought bulk of the education system under state control. The prevalence of a unified state ownership and management in education has motivated us to look at the education in monolithic terms. However within the state managed education system of today there are two parallel systems identified by the medium of instructions. In actual fact there is a third system because some schools are specially designated as Muslim schools.

According to school census in 1981 only 138 (1.5%) schools out of 6927 in the whole island had more than one medium of instruction. Over the years the number of schools having students studying in more than one medium has decreased. In other words now we have an ethnically segregated school system, although bulk of the schools are managed by the state. This has far reaching implications for educational policy. However it has not been given much attention in our discussions.

Table 16 gives some of the basic data for the ethnically segregated school system of Central Province in 1981. From a total of 1436 schools in the district, 58 (4%) have more than one medium. Bulk of the Tamil medium schools are concentrated in the Nuwara Eliya district. These are mainly schools in the estate sector.

Table 16

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya	C.P.
Total Number of Schools	759	300	377	1436
Sinhala schools	565	253	159	977
Tamil schools	122	27	214	377
Muslim schools	72	20	4	96
No of schools with more than one medium	37	10	11	58
Total Number of students				
Sinhala students	216402	71874	46757	335033
Tamil students	21306	6143	38659	66108
Muslim students	33956	7277	3001	44234

There is very little data available to show the ethnic based disparities in the school system of the Central Province. Following data illustrate some of the prevailing problems.

Table 17

Pupil/Teacher Ratio

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya
Sinhala Schools	21.7	22.3	21.1
Tamil Schools	17.9	44.5	49.4
Muslim Schools	35.6	19.3	73.2

The school system catering to the Sinhala students has a Pupil/Teacher ratio that is comparable to national standards. The situation for the other two ethnic groups varies enormously.

Table 18

	Kandy	Matale	N'Eliya
School candidates qualifying at the 1st attempt to G.C.E. (A.L.) on the basis of G.C.E. (O.L.) results in Science			
Sinhala Medium	12.5	8.5	5.4
Tamil Medium	10.7	8.3	2.8
Same as above in Arts, Comm.			
Sinhala Medium	7.2	6.5	5.6
Tamil Medium	7.7	7.9	2.8

At the upper levels of education there are glaring differences in the performance in the Sinhala and Tamil media. Again the worst performance is in the Tamil medium of the Nuwara Eliya district. Here only 2.8% of the students qualify to follow advance level studies at the first attempt. The performance in the Sinhala medium is also not that impressive - only 5.4% qualifying in the Science stream. Generally these figures shown for the upper level of education demonstrates the poor quality of our education as we go up the educational ladder.

The other data that throws some light on differences in educational standards between ethnic groups in the province is available from sectoral data. Table 18 summarises this data.

Table 19**Literacy Rates 1985/1986**

	Sri Lanka	Urban	Rural	Estate
Male	88.6	92.4	88.5	74.5
Female	80.0	86.1	80.7	45.9
Total	84.2	89.1	84.6	59.4

Source : Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey 1985/86 - Department of Census and Statistics - Preliminary Report 1987

School Avoidance Rate 1981/1982

	All Island	Urban	Rural	Estate
5 - 9	19.87	16.69	18.95	40.74
10 - 13	7.07	6.63	5.79	26.19
14 - 18	8.94	7.33	7.85	28.26

Source: Central Bank Consumer Finance Survey 1981/82 - 1984

Educational Levels

Estate Sector	1963	1973	1978/79	1981/82
No Schooling (Illiterate)	57.1	51.7	43.5	44.49
No Schooling (Literate)			1.1	0.77
Primary	34.9	40.6	47.4	44.42
Secondary	7.2	6.2	6.7	8.46
Passed (O/L)/(SSC)	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.71
Passed (A.L.)/(HSC)	-	-	-	0.15
Undergraduate	-	-	-	-
Passed Degree	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Non-Estate Sector	1963	1973	1978/79	1981/82
No Schooling (Illiterate)	34.0	30.1	21.5	23.15
No Schooling (Literate)			1.0	0.43
Primary	39.8	37.6	38.1	37.44
Secondary	21.2	25.8	28.3	27.0
Passed (O/L)/(SSC)	3.8	5.7	9.5	9.92
Passed (A.L.)/(HSC)		0.4	1.0	1.49
Undergraduate			0.1	0.12
Passed Degree	1.2	0.2	0.4	0.45
Other	0.2	0.1		

Source : Central Bank Consumer Finance Surveys for different years

As it had been shown in so many other studies this data also confirms the fact that estate sector lags far behind the other two sectors when it comes to educational standards. Given the fact that bulk of the population in the estate sector belong to the Indian Tamil ethnic group this data also reflects low standards of education among the Indian Tamil population.

Emergence of Provincial Councils and the education system

Devolution of powers in education

The establishment of Provincial Councils and devolution of a certain degree of power to them is a significant development in Sri Lankan history. The major social force that brought this about was the ethnic conflict which dominated the politics of Sri Lanka during the past decade.

The Provincial Council system is by far the most significant attempt at restructuring the highly centralised state of Sri Lanka. This is bound to have its impact in many areas including education. One of the salient features of educational development in Sri Lanka is its centralising tendencies over the years. This coincided with the expansion of the role of the state in education. This process created in the seventies a highly centralised system which managed at one time almost one third of the entire workforce in the public sector.

The pressures to decentralise education was apparent even before the Provincial Council system came into being. As we have already mentioned the White Paper on education proposed by the post '77 UNP regime had proposals for decentralisation.

The Provincial Council system has a far reaching impact on the organisational structures of the education system. The system of devolution in the sphere of education as envisaged by the 13th Amendment has the following salient features;

- Centre retains National Policy in all subjects which will include education as well. Centre also seem to determine some of the basic elements of the education system such as minimum age of and other criteria for school admission, determination of the structure of education, curriculum (with some provisions for the PCs to change) and conducting of public examinations.

- In the area of planning, devolved Educational Functions include,
 - a. Preparation of plans (educational development plan and annual implementation plan)
 - b. Implementation of the Annual Educational Development Plan.

However since the National Policy on all subjects and planning are part of the reserved list, it is not clear what is meant by planning in the area of education that has been devolved to the Provinces. Rest of the provisions seem to indicate what is given to the Provincial Councils is implementation planning primarily in the area of infrastructure development. This means at the level of the general educational policy centre maintains the control. The PCs can prepare their own educational development plans and plans for implementation. These development plans seem to include mostly development of infrastructure and facilities of the school system.

- The PCs have powers to manage the bulk of the secondary education excluding what are called national schools. These are mainly well equipped 'elite' schools in urban centres. In March 1989 the Secretary to the Ministry of Education announced that around 20 schools have been designated as national schools and other 'special schools'(24). Centre also retains power to appoint Principals to Grade 1 schools which have provisions for Advanced level studies. In other words Centre will appoint principals of grade 1 schools in addition to managing the national schools.

- PCs have the power of recruitment, and transfer, etc of the teachers in secondary education other than national schools. Training will come under the centrally managed National Institute of Education. In the case of transfers too teachers have the right to appeal to the Public Service Commission. In other words PCs will manage the bulk of the workforce in the education system, with certain provisions been given for the centre to intervene.

- The content of the education and the examination system is largely under the control of the centre. PCs will hold some of the local level examinations and it can bring about certain changes in primary curriculum and in specified subjects of secondary curriculum with the approval of the Centre. Production and distribution of text books by the provinces has to be approved by the Centre.

- PCs have been given control over other aspects of education like pre-school education, informal education, provision of library facilities, sports facilities, etc.

- At the level of the middle and higher levels centre retains the control of the existing system. But an interesting aspect of the amendment is that PCs have been given concurrent powers in the establishment of new Universities and in "The establishment of degree awarding institutions under the Universities (Amendment) Act no.7 of 1985, and other institutions for tertiary, technical and post-school education and training"(25). The latter Act was mainly meant to allow the establishment privately managed degree awarding institutions at the post secondary level.

The pattern of devolution in the sphere of education visualised in the 13th Amendment can be generalised as follows: In this package the most important policy issues on the education like the structure, content, examinations, teacher training, are still under the control of the central authorities. Although there are provisions for the provinces to tamper with these it is severely limited. Centre has also kept within itself the 'elite' schools after designating them as national schools and the appointment of the heads of grade 1 schools. It is interesting to note how the centre has always been trying to keep these schools out of the reforms that the other schools are subjected to. Another example of this same practise was keeping them out of the clustering exercise carried out under the White paper on education.

The Provinces are given the management of the personnel and material inputs into the rest of the secondary educational structures. Although in terms of hierarchical importance these parts of the education system might not be that important, provinces nevertheless gets a large chunk of the education system and they will have to manage it. In fact in terms of persons and material the provinces will now have the bulk of the education system to manage.

Of course the provinces will have to be provided with the resources to manage these educational structures. However it is much more easy now to put pressures on the Provinces

to become more self reliant in order to reduce the burden on the centre for resources for education. The handing over of the management of the bulk of the secondary structures to the provinces can be a more efficient method of doing it. Therefore devolution of power in the sphere of education coincides with the strategies to manage education more efficiently.

In addition to transferring the management of persons and material of the bulk of the secondary education system to the Provincial Councils it is the handing over of powers to recruit and transfer teachers amounts to an important political concession given to the provinces within this context of limited powers enjoyed by them. Recruitment of teachers has been an important area of political patronage hitherto controlled by the politicians powerful at the level of the centre. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms this has been a source of power to the politicians. Therefore conceding this to the politicians at the provincial level has been an important development. However it is precisely in this area there have been complains about non compliance by the centre. In a recent document put out by the EPRLF led Provincial Government of the North/East province it was noted that, "Provision of facilities, to all state schools, supervision and management of pre-schools transfer and disciplinary control of educational personnel have been devolved. However the recruitment of teachers continued to be done by the Central Government, in spite of protests by the Provincial Government"(26). In this document which was produce months after the inauguration of the PC system this by far is the most significant complain of the provincial administration in the area of education.

The other interesting feature of this package of devolution in the sphere of education is the concurrent power in the post- secondary education mentioned above. It is obviously an incentive for the Provincial authorities to encourage private initiatives in education at this level. It is also significant that this is the only power given to the Provincial authorities at the tertiary level of education. This too is in keeping with the post'77 policies of encouraging private initiatives in education and this is an attempt to get the co-operation of provincial authorities in this task.

Resource allocation in education in Provincial Councils

During the initial years of its operation Provincial Councils was provided with certain block grants mainly to cover their recurrent costs of the devolved functions that have been handed over to them. A more comprehensive scheme of funding the Provincial Councils is being planned from 1992 onwards. The arrangement for 1991 will be a transitional one keeping in mind the envisaged scheme in 1992.

Table 19

Provisional estimates of Recurrent Expenditure of Provincial Councils on Devolved Functions for 1990*
(Rs.Mln. at 1989 prices)

	WP	CP	SP	NEP	NWP	NCP	UVA	SAB	All
Total for devolved functions	2827	1634	1623	1896	1541	821	740	1307	12388
Education	1340	680	700	580	620	280	280	480	4960
% for Education	47.4	41.6	43.1	30.6	40.2	34.1	37.8	36.7	40.0

Source : M. Ranjit P. Salgado - Report on Fiscal aspects of the Public Sector restructuring project (Financial devolution to the provinces) - September 1989

The estimates for recurrent expenditure of the Provincial Councils clearly shows the funds needed just to maintain the existing facilities for education will form on an average 40% of the recurrent expenditure of Provincial Councils. This is the largest item of expenditure for all Provincial Councils. In the case of the Central Province PC 41.6% of the current expenditure is needed for education. The bulk of this educational expenditure will be pay teachers salaries.

The present estimates also show that devolved revenues allocated to the Provincial Councils will cover roughly about 15% of the current expenditure. In other words the PCs will depend to a large extent on various forms of grants provided by the Centre for new developments and expansion of activities in all areas.

The envisaged scheme for allocating finances for the Provincial Councils is partly needs-oriented and partly principles based. It consists of several components,

- Needs oriented aspect is reflected in block grants .This is determined after assessing the current expenditure and the devolved revenues of the PCs. The block grant will be calculated as the amount needed to fill the gap between a pre-determined proportion of the recurrent expenditure of the Province and the devolved revenue collected by that Province. For 1992-1994 period the pre-determined proportion is 80%.

- Principles based aspect is reflected in criteria based grants.(available for PCs on programs and projects of their own choosing) Criteria -based grants are determined by computing an indices which reflects the 'level of development' of each Province. Lower the level of development, higher will be the amount allocated through the criteria-based grant. The following are the criteria and the weightage for each criteria in determining criteria-based grants

1. Per capita income	10%
2. Difference between per capita of each province and highest per capita income among Provinces	10%
3. Poverty Index	10%
4. Employment Rate of Unemployment	15%
5. Education Index of Educational Status	15%
6. Health and Nutrition(Composite Index)	
Infant mortality per 1000 live births	7.5%
Expenditure on food per capita per mnth.	7.5%
Total	15%
7. Economic and Social Infrastructure (Composite Index)	
No. of persons per hospital bed	5%
No. of classrooms per 1000 in age group 5-19	5%
Households lacking toilet facilities	5%
Households without electricity	5%
Roads per square kilometre	5%

- A third aspect is the matching grants which hopes to encourage revenue generation at the Provincial Council level. "The matching grants will be computed on the basis of formulae that relate to the excess of the actual collection of devolved revenues by a Provincial Council in a given over the the "benchmark revenue" representing the revenue generated from the devolved sources in a base year (or base period). For the application of the formulae, the Provinces will be placed in different categories, taking into account of their existing revenue base, revenue potential, tax incidence and tax administration capacity. The formulae will incorporate a slab system with a view to further reducing the possibility that the Provinces with the larger revenue bases would receive disproportionately larger matching grants." (27)

According to this scheme matching grants are expected to become a significant element in the total availability of funds. The devolved revenues should increase markedly. The total availability of criteria based should also increase. Thus the block grants are likely to become less important as a source of funds. It may be envisaged that by 1994, the end of the first three-year period of the full operation of the scheme, criteria- based, matching grants and devolved revenues would account for the major part of the available funding.

On the basis of the above following Central Province will be allocated the following, if the devolved revenues show a 100% increase from the 1987 levels and Rs.1000 million is available to be distributes as criteria-based grants.

Block Grant - Rs.1023.2 Mln. - 63%
Matching Grants - Rs.178 Mln. - 11%
Criteria-base Grants - Rs.138 Mln. - 8.5%
Devolved revenues - Rs.284 Mln. -17.5%

This shows even with such a revenue effort, the block grants would still form the bulk of the resources available for the Province. In other words the Province will have to depend on the funds allocated from the Centre in the foreseeable future.

Conclusions

In the concluding and final section of this paper we hope to focus our attention on some of the policy issues that are emerging in the area of education keeping in mind the analysis provided in the previous sections of this study. We shall begin this with a recapitulation of the conclusions presented in the earlier parts of the study.

The backdrop to the specific analysis on education was provided by part 1 of the study which looked at the emerging tendencies in the ethno-political processes in the Central Province. Here we began by emphasising the importance of politics in understanding and identifying tasks that face provincial councils in the Central Province. Our objective was to show the inadequacy of pure administrative approaches in policy analysis. Pure administrative approaches treat the institutions set up to devolve power in a political vacuum. On the other hand recognition of politics, specially ethno-politics, is extremely important even to understand the policy problems faced by PCs.

Our study of the emerging socio-economic and political tendencies showed the volatility of the Central Province. This area is ethnically segregated. Population movements and growth

of violence in politics has pushed the Indian Tamil minority to look for 'safe areas' in this province. However there is a tremendous pressure on land arising both from socio-economic processes within the peasant sector and also fuelled by nationalist ideologies that hope to redress historical grievances of the Kandyan Sinhalese. These tendencies make the situation of Indian Tamil minority very vulnerable and brings in a sense of insecurity to this population. In other words the province has all the elements that can contribute to an ethnic conflict. These processes are also taking place in a context of a general ethnic conflict in the country which is influencing the growing ethnic identity of the Indian Tamil population.

Finally the first part of the study looked at the significance of the emergence of a system of Provincial Councils in this context of growing polarisation between ethnic groups. This newly formed structure certainly provides a new channel for political representation. Specially in the case if Indian Tamil population PCs has become an important institution for political expression. However our analysis pointed out two important factors that limit the effectiveness of provincial councils as a mechanism of providing answers to problems faced by the region. In the first place the powers given to the PCs is such that it is extremely difficult to imagine that it can play any significant role in addressing socio-economic problems that underlie tensions in the area. Secondly, in the case of Indian Tamil ethno-social group the capacity of their representatives to bring about changes that can improve the living conditions of their own constituency is extremely limited. This arises because of the fact that plantations where bulk of the Indian Tamils live and work are entirely controlled by the centre. This limits the capacity of Indian Tamil members of the Provincial Councils of using the Councils to address the grievances of their own constituency.

The second part of the study undertook to look at problems in education and educational policies keeping in mind the conflict laden context of this area as described in the first part of the study. Education too has been an issue that has contributed to the social as well as ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. Therefore the minimum objective of policy analysis in education is to identify policy prescriptions that at least will not further aggravate the situation. Identifications of such pitfalls is a first step towards formulations of policies that can improve the situation in a positive direction in the future.

Analysis in the part 2 of the study first looked at factors which make education a politically sensitive issue. We linked this with its role as a means of social mobility. This in turn is a result of the pattern of socio-economic development of Sri Lanka which does not create other means of social mobility for a large section of the population. In this analysis of social mobility provided by education we have focused our attention on what we have termed as 'intermediate classes'. As we have explained, this particular section of our society have benefited from the expansion of educational facilities through the state intervention in education. Therefore the ability or inability of education to provide social mobility directly affects their interests. In that section we also have emphasised the importance and the significant influence of this class in politics of Sri Lanka.

Social contradictions generated by development policies followed since 1977 should be understood within this important role played by 'intermediate classes' in social and political processes of Sri Lanka. Broadly speaking this group formed the social force that changed the course of Sri Lanka's post independent history in 50s and the 60s. They were and are the ardent supporters of the pre '77 package of development policies within a capitalist framework. These policies helped in their competition with the 'elite' and in their upward social mobility. Policies followed during this period narrowed the gap between the 'elite' and 'intermediate classes'. The bulk of the population of Sri Lanka falls to the third category of

'the rest'. In rural areas marginal farmers and landless labourers fall into this category. So-called welfare policies in the past have not changed their condition much. However they form the social base of mass politics.

Generally the post-'77 policies had led to a greater social polarisation. The specific character of this polarisation can differ from area to area. But we would argue that the more important factor to understand social contradictions generated by these policies is the growth of the gap between the 'intermediate classes' and the 'elite'. The polarisation between the 'elite' and the 'intermediate classes' has taken place in a context of certain economic growth as well. This growth has given a relative sense of prosperity and has expanded the availability of consumer goods and enhanced consumeristic ideology. In such a context the perception of relative depravity felt by the 'intermediate classes' is aggravated and this accentuates the already existing social contradictions.

However the present stage of the capitalist development in this country does require the general direction of policy changes initiated since 1977. This is dictated by the logic of capitalism. Capitalism does not provide any other alternative path. This also means that contradictions between the 'elite' and the 'intermediate classes' which characterise this phase of capitalist growth is also an inevitable outcome of this development process. Capitalism will have to overcome this contradiction in order to move further in its path of development.

Manifestation of this conflict between the 'elite' and 'intermediate classes' is apparent in various spheres in Sri Lanka including education. As a result of the decisive role that education has played in the social mobility of the 'intermediate classes,' changes in educational policies contribute very much to contradictions between 'elite' and the 'intermediate classes'. From our discussion of the educational policies followed since 1977 we can identify several developments which have actually gone against the interests of the 'intermediate classes'. These are,

(a) The incapacity of the system to provide adequate resources to meet the educational demands through the state system. The amount of resources spent on education has declined relative to the demand.

(b) Stagnation of opportunities provided at the post secondary level of education for the large numbers streaming out of the secondary education. This reduces the role of education as a means of social mobility.

(c) All these amounts to a reduction of the role that the Central government played in providing educational opportunities. Similar interpretations can be given to the devolutionary exercise in education, through which central government will reduce its role. 'Intermediate classes' could interpret this as an example of state abdicating its role of providing opportunities through education for their social mobility.

(d) Encouragement given to the private sector in education. This gives more opportunities to the 'elite'. It also reduces the relative weight that state had in education.

All these are significant policy shifts in education during the post '77 period. Basically these changes amount to a reduction of the role played by state in education and encouragement of private initiatives. This is a change from the prevailing pattern and it could go against the interests of the 'intermediate classes'. At the same time the limitations of resources available for education seem to be such that these tendencies will dominate education in the near future. In class terms it will mean the capacity for education to be a means of social mobility

in the same manner as in the past will be difficult. In social terms it will amount to an accentuation of the conflict between, 'elite' and 'intermediate classes' in the educational sphere. Thus the major question for educational policy today is how to devise an education system that fulfils needs of capitalism today, while managing the social conflicts generated by this class contradiction.

In understanding these contradictions it is necessary to take into account the qualitative aspects of these policy changes in addition to the extent to which they have become prevalent in society. For example it is true that the growth of a private sector in education has been very slow and still the private initiatives account for relatively small proportion of educational facilities. However the social contradictions generated by it far exceeds the extent of the phenomena because of the social class affected by it. This is supplemented by the fact that attempts at privatisation is directed at the tertiary level of education which is crucial for social mobility. This perhaps explains the extent to which the Private Medical College issue got politicised. The establishment of the Private Medical College was a step that severely threatened the foothold that 'intermediate classes' have obtained in a prestigious and lucrative area of higher education due to their political power in the past. Therefore the attempts by the government to reverse this by allowing privatisation in this sector met with great resistance. Although the political mobilisation on this issue was spearheaded by the radical J.V.P., there is no doubt that the issue did have wide support in the society. Some of the opposition came within the governing party as well.

There is the possibility of similar tendencies in the sphere of middle level education. As shown by our earlier discussion this is an area where there is much emphasis given now and also a sector of education where private initiatives can expand. It is also a sector where a large proportions of students who cannot enter higher education will have hopes on. Therefore if the access to this sector gets determined by monetary resources that the students can command it can become a major point of controversy in the future. Such a possibility exists if the private sector begins to play a significant role in middle level of education.

The other conflict that education policy making has to face is the ethnic conflict. As we have discussed access to educational opportunities, specially at the level of higher education was a major issue in the aggravation of the ethnic conflict. In addition, it also has a relevance in the area of identity formation of different ethnic groups. In the segregated educational system of Sri Lanka schools are considered as important vehicles for fostering of ethnic or religious identities of the younger generation. Therefore ethnic groups are sensitive about changes in the educational system that has a relevance for identity formation.

It is within such a context that one has to look at the policy options available in education. Confining specifically to the Central Province we have seen how the education system of this province is ethnically segregated. There are Sinhala schools, Tamil schools and Muslim schools. At the same time there is a significant disparity in the facilities available and standard of education among the ethnic groups. The relative low standards shown by Indian Tamil population in education has been shown over and over again by many studies. Data collected in this paper also has confirmed this. Therefore there is a strong argument for provision of more funds to the schools attended by this population. Bulk of these schools are now going to be managed by the Provincial Councils.

On the other hand there is also inter-district disparity in educational facilities with Kandy district emerging as the better off district. Even within a district disparities are very high.

This tendency becomes more pronounced at the higher levels of secondary education. A child in Kandy district for example has more chances of succeeding at the Advance level than a child in Matale district. With PCs managing the provision of facilities to the bulk of schools, there is the likelihood that disparities between so called national schools which are managed by the Centre and other schools in the province will be further aggravated.

Thus resource allocation in education in the Central Province has to be delicately managed keeping in mind both ethnic disparities as well as social disparities in the province. In a highly volatile area like the central province and in a politically sensitive subject like education it is extremely important that this balance is maintained. Some of the specific policy prescription that can be advocated in this context are as follows;

- Province can develop a special project for the upliftment of estate schools and relatively worst off grade 2 and 3 schools. This could be a priority for the Provincial Councils and undertaken in such a way that a careful ethnic balance is maintained. Such a project will have as its principle aim the improvement of infrastructure facilities and quality of teaching in worst off schools attended by all ethnic groups.

- In tackling the problem of social disparities attention should be focused on senior secondary level of education. Basically children from different social and ethnic backgrounds, who qualify in their 'O' levels to follow the 'A' levels, should have adequate facilities to continue their studies. This means educational facilities in Matale and Nuwara Eliya districts at this level should be given more attention and resources.

- National schools of the Province managed by the Centre should have objectives far beyond catering to a privileged minority. The very fact they are controlled from the centre can place them in a privileged position and widen the disparity between them and other schools. In contrast to this their facilities should be open to children coming from other schools of the province at least at the higher levels.

- National schools also should be places where special efforts are made to cross the ethnic barriers at school level. This will be the task of the Centre that will manage them. Since the Centre will not have the burden of managing all other schools at the secondary level it will be able to devote much more attention to this all important task.

- Continuation of a segregated education system in a multiethnic province like the Central Province has far reaching consequences. In the allocation of resources for education in this Province special material incentives should be given to schools that can develop programmes to cross ethnic barriers. This should be a special concern in planning education in the province in general.

These are some of the policy prescription that emerge from this study. They follow directly from the processes and tendencies mapped out in this study. If adequate attention is given to such policies keeping in mind the overall context mapped out in this study, some steps can be taken in a positive direction in order to improve the ethnic and social relations in the area.

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